CUENTOS TICOS

SHORT STORIES of COSTA RICA

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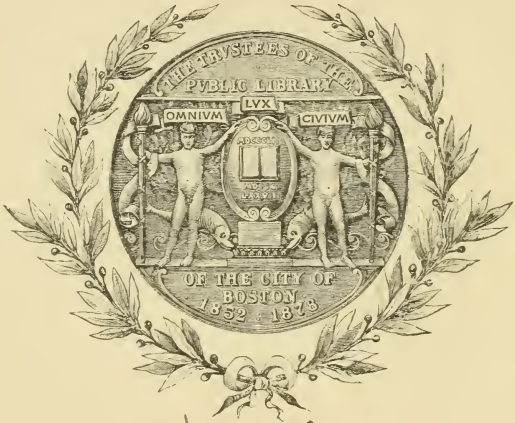

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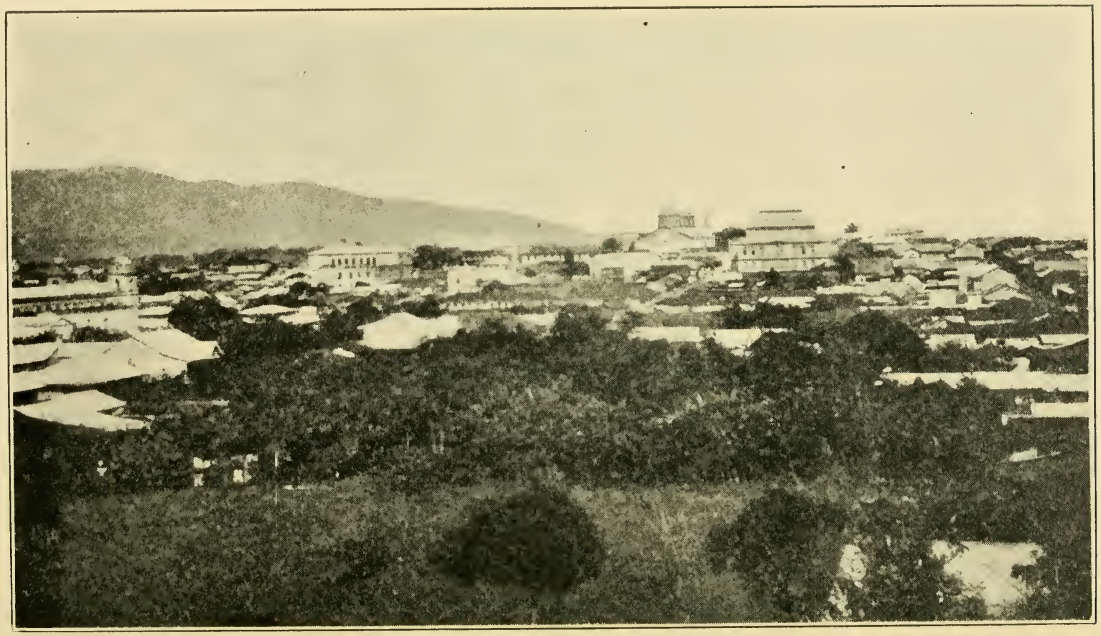
Cuentos Ticos

R. Fernández Guardia



A VISTA OF SAN JOSÉ

Cuentos Ticos

Short Stories of Costa Rica

By

Ricardo Fernández Guardia

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Sketch by Gray Casement

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A Central American Arcadia

CUENTOS TICOS

A CENTRAL AMERICAN ARCADIA

SEVERAL years ago a well-known young writer made a journey through a part of Central America, and on his return home wrote several bright and interesting articles about the countries he had seen. They were written in a satirical tone, and no doubt did much to increase the prejudice already so common amongst us against Spanish-American countries. He made the mistake of judging the whole from a part.

Americans are apt to group all of these republics together in the contempt which they feel for them. If we are correctly informed, this writer visited only Honduras and a little corner of Nicaragua, which are commonly held to be the most backward and unprogressive republics of Central America. If he had continued his journey south to Costa Rica, or north to Guatemala, he might have written in a different strain.

From time to time some enterprising newspaper sends out a correspondent to "write up" some of these countries. As he usually starts out, however, with a preconceived prejudice, and makes only a flying visit in each place he generally acquires more misinformation than anything else; it takes time to get acquainted with Spanish-American life, at least with the best features of it.

It may, therefore, be of interest to take a look at one of these little republics through the eyes of a friendly observer, and such the writer frankly declares himself to be.

This article must confine itself to Costa Rica, as it is the only one about which he feels competent to write with accuracy, and as it lies next to the new Republic of Panama, soon to be the scene of such a great undertaking, it may be of especial interest at the present time.

In the first place, to show the dense ignorance prevailing at home about Spanish-America, the average person does not even know where Costa Rica is, and generally thinks one is talking about Porta Rico, which he may have heard of since the Spanish war. When corrected and told that it is in Central America, he usually says:

"Ah, yes now I know. Don't they have a revolution down there almost every day, and isn't the climate dreadfully unhealthy?"

It is astonishing how little Americans know

of the countries to the south of them. Life in Spanish-America is a sealed book, as little known to them as that of Central Africa. The general impression seems to conform with what the New York tough said in describing the street in which he lived:

"De furder down yer go de tougher it gits, an' I lives in de las' house, see!"

In speaking of Central America, Costa Rica corresponds to the last house, yet in many respects it is the gem of the five republics.

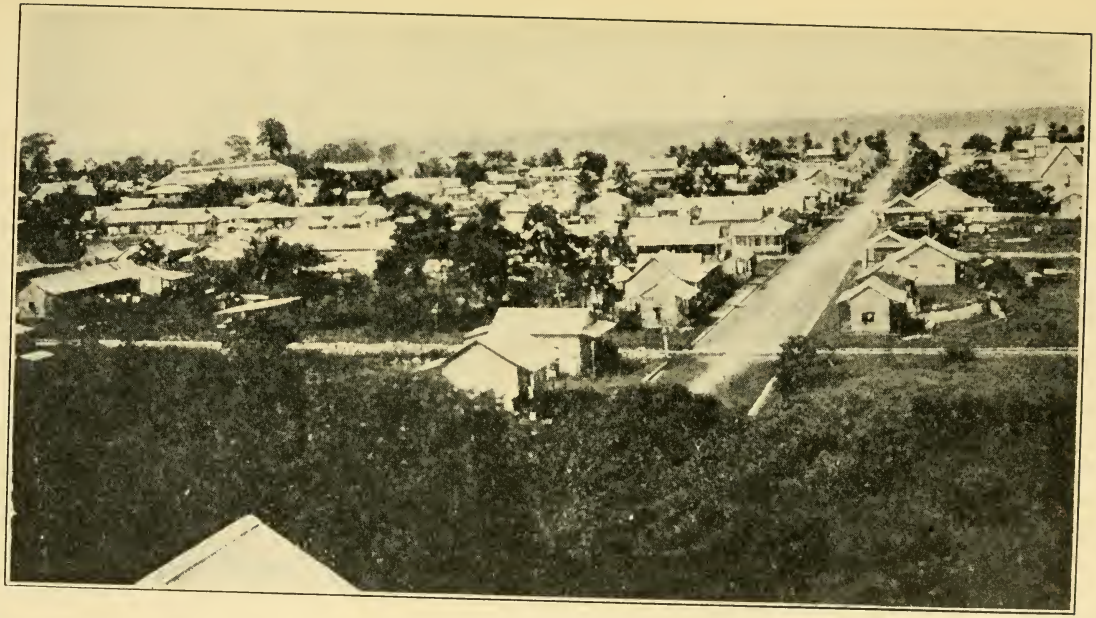
It is unfortunately true that revolutions are so common in the Spanish-American world as to give ground for the impression that they are always in a state of disorder. The good republics, however, suffer from the evil reputation of their bad neighbors. There are seventeen of them between the Rio Grande and Cape Horn, and in some one of these there is almost always a revolution in progress. Nevertheless there are several that rarely suffer from these ills; Costa Rica, for one, has not had anything worthy the name of a revolution for nearly a score of years, and we could mention others equally fortunate.

The bad climate is confined to the coast plain. Nearly the whole interior of Central America is high mountainous country, where the climate is as truly temperate as any place in the world. It is never very hot nor very cold, and frost is a thing unknown except on the high mountains.

Costa Rica although a small country presents a great variety of scenery and of climate. On both coasts one finds the intense heat and the rank overpowering vegetation of the tropics, but on ascending, both climate and vegetation become more like those of the temperate zone. Yet, whether on the coast or in the highlands, the scenery is always beautiful. The dry season in the country west of the main range, which includes the oldest settled part, extends from November to April. During the latter end of this period the vegetation becomes parched and brown, while on the side towards the Caribbean, during the same months, it is raining every day and the vegetation is fresh and green.

Most of the country is mountainous but in Guanacaste, the province occupying the northwestern part of the republic, one finds another change of scene. There are open grassy plains with patches of woodland scattered about at random. It is the chief cattle-raising district and here are located the largest cattle ranches of the country.

The most convenient route to Costa Rica is from New York or New Orleans by steamer to Port Limon. From there a narrow gauge railroad leads to San José, the capital, a little over a hundred miles distant. The railroad is the property of an English company, and considering the difficulties of operating in the tropics, such as tremendous rains, washouts and slides,



PORT LIMON

gives very fair service. It runs a through train each way daily between San José and Port Limon, besides a number of locals.

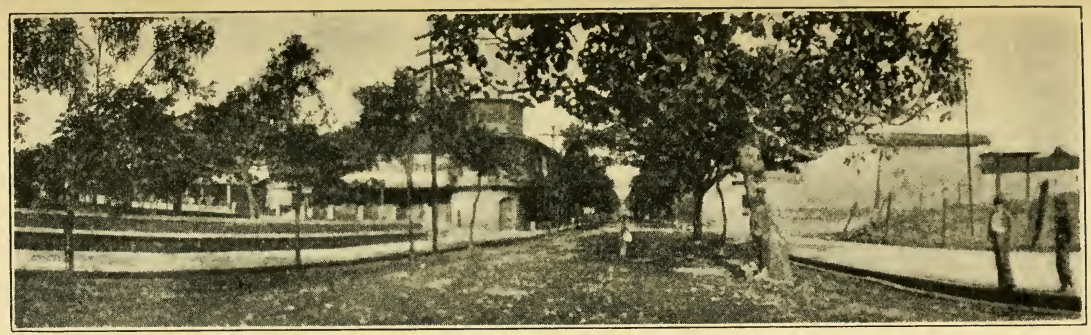
The railroad is very substantially built, having practically no wood in its construction, all the bridges and even the ties being of iron. The rolling stock also is of good quality, and is mostly of iron and steel.

The road first passes over the coast plain for some twenty miles when it begins to climb, finally reaching an elevation of over five thousand feet. Then it descends again another thousand before reaching San José, which is about four thousand feet above sea level. The scenery throughout the whole route is magnificent and well worth the journey from New York, or even farther.

The line climbs about the skirts of the main range, in which are two great volcanoes over eleven thousand feet in height. The mountains are as grand and rugged as the Rockies, with the added beauty of the luxuriant tropical verdure that clothes them to their summits, and of many foaming white cascades and waterfalls that seam their green sides. As one reaches the heights of Cartago, the old capital, the scene changes. The traveller might imagine himself in New England, for the train runs through pastures bounded by gray, moss-grown stone walls, and if it were not for the tile-roofed adobe houses here and there, or if he did not follow with his eye the long slopes

of the volcano, Irazú, until they lose themselves in the clouds, the illusion would be almost perfect. There is no sign of tropical luxuriance here. On the contrary, the vegetation has a most northern aspect. Once past the divide, however, which is just beyond the quaint old capital, the train begins to descend towards San José and soon is passing through fine old coffee plantations where the coffee trees are shaded by bananas, plantains and other broad-leaved growths. From time to time as the train turns about the shoulder of some hill, one catches a glimpse of the broad interior valley which for more than three hundred years has contained the bulk of Costa Rica's population. It has the look of an old settled country. As far as one can see it is cultivated, and the primeval forest, which seems to predominate on the side towards the Caribbean, has here been almost entirely cleared off except on the mountain tops. The lower slopes of the mountains appear to be painted in patches of different colors where sugar-cane, corn and other crops are growing, the whole having rather the appearance of a checker-board done in varying shades of green and brown instead of red and black. The whole scene is beautiful, strange, foreign, unlike anything to be seen at home.

When the train rolls into the station at San José the traveller expects to find everything foreign also, and, judging from the glimpse



CALLE DE LA ESTACION OR STATION STREET

IN THE NATIONAL PARK, SAN JOSÉ

he has had of Cartago, with its old churches, moss-grown tile roofs and grass-grown streets, he is prepared to be taken back into the eighteenth century. Things are foreign enough to be sure, but there is a goodly number of modern improvements to be seen. Hacks and hackmen crowd about the station entrance, electric light poles and lamps are numerous, and a neat trolley car is waiting for passengers in front of the station. There is a broad macadamized roadway, bordered on both sides by trees, which leads off toward the centre of the city, and a little beyond the station is a handsome park separated from the street by a concrete wall. There are policemen in neat uniforms; the streets are clean and in fairly good repair; everything has a civilized look that pleases one after the stories which he has doubtless heard of filthy, ill-paved Spanish-American towns.

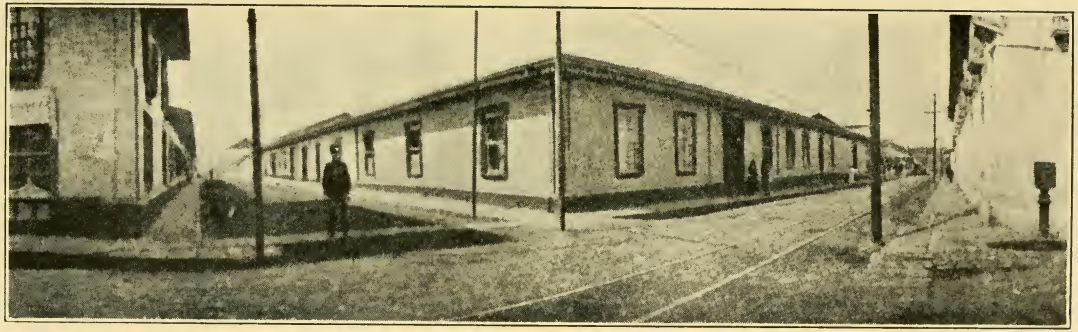
If the traveller decides to take a hack instead of the electric tram, he is soon rattling down the above-mentioned wide street bordered by trees, past substantial looking houses, through another pretty part, then on past shops and residences, crossing intersecting streets every hundred yards, observing that they grow narrower and the city more compact as he advances. The houses are mostly of one story, rising straight from the inner edge of the narrow sidewalk.

When he arrives at the principal hotel, a

two-story structure, in the centre of the city, he has another surprise. The rooms are neatly furnished and the bed linen is clean. Upon dining he finds the table appointments clean, and that which is served to eat by no means bad, and he begins to feel that things have been misrepresented to him.

In the evening, if it happens to be Thursday or Sunday, he will hear strains of music. Strolling out in search of it, he soon finds another park, or more correctly speaking, a botanical garden, with walks winding among palms and flowers and with benches here and there.

He will see a number of people gathered together, promenading along the walks or seated on the benches, to hear the music of a fine military band in a pavilion. All classes are in evidence. There are gentlemen and ladies. Some of the latter wear hats and others have beautiful china silk shawls or pañolons thrown about their shoulders. There are barefooted peons in short jackets with sashes about their waists, and peon girls, many of them in the low-necked and short-sleeved garments characteristic of their class, with the gay-colored scarfs known as rebozos thrown about them, the fringed ends of which hang down almost to their feet. When the concert is over and the traveller has returned and gone to bed, he probably passes a most comfortable night, for it is delightfully cool; be-



STREET SCENE IN SAN JOSÉ

fore morning, indeed, he is likely to need a blanket. Moreover, it is not probable that he will be bothered by those tropical pests—fleas and mosquitoes.

As one wanders through the streets in the daytime he may feel somewhat as though he were on a stage set for a play or an opera. Things look as if arranged with an eye to picturesque effects; the one-story houses of brick or adobe covered with stucco, the eaves overhanging the narrow sidewalks, and the two-story houses nearly all with small iron balconies at the upper windows, in the Spanish fashion. The fort-like cuartels or barracks have mediæval looking towers and loop-holes; the heavy doors at the entrance have a small barred window through which a soldier's face is always peering.

The streets are full of lumbering oxcarts with solid wooden wheels, in front of which marches the barefooted boyero or driver, invariably with an iron-tipped goad in his hand. There is surely no lack of local color. The sunshine is bright, the air is wonderfully clear, and all about are beautiful cloud-capped mountains, their green slopes dotted with white villages and church-towers. The land on which the city is built drops abruptly to the north and to the south, into river valleys, so that as one looks down any of the cross streets, he sees a patch of green mountainside framed like a picture in the apparent end of the street

where it terminates in the valley. A person must indeed be hard to please if he is not charmed with the prospect.

One of the first things to impress a stranger in San José is the number of soldiers and officers to be seen about the streets. They seem to be everywhere, so that one wonders whether Costa Rica does not support a large army for so small a country. On inquiry, however, he finds that the entire number under arms is only five or six hundred. When he considers further that they are nearly all concentrated in the four principal towns of the country, he does not wonder so much. Two or three hundred soldiers make quite a showing in a city of thirty thousand inhabitants. The rank and file are not very imposing individuals. Most of them are barefooted, and for uniforms wear ill-fitting suits of blue dungaree, which for a warm climate answer the purpose well, it being cool and durable. The officers, however, are more presentable, dressed in their neat uniforms of dark blue cloth with gold braid. Some of these have quite a soldierly appearance.

A squad of from fifty to a hundred men can be seen almost every day in the Plaza de Artilleria next to the artillery barracks. They seem to be fairly well drilled, and are doubtless sufficiently good for any service they may be called on to perform, such as putting down a revolutionary uprising. In these countries

SOLDIERS DRILLING IN THE PLAZA DE ARTILLERIA

where the population is hot-headed and volcanic in its nature, an armed force is a necessity and undoubtedly works for the good of all by preserving the peace.

Costa Rica, as we have already mentioned, has been without anything worthy the name of revolution for some fifteen years. There have been, however, several attempts to overthrow the government, which, thanks to the military and an efficient police force, were each put down in a single day with very little loss of life.

As an example of the inaccurate statements made by the above-noted newspaper correspondents, we remember an article written several years ago by one of them who had just visited Costa Rica. In it he speaks of the "barefooted soldiers with their rusty muskets" who file out into the park each morning for inspection. They are barefooted to be sure, but they are armed with long range, breech-loading rifles in good condition, instead of "rusty muskets."

One lives in the midst of military stir and bustle, hears the bugle sound the reveille in the morning and taps at night, can see inspection and guard mount every day in the park; all of which adds to the picturesqueness of the life. The soldiers, although not much to look at, exist for a stern purpose, and when one thinks that they may be called on any day to risk their lives in a bloody conflict it gives

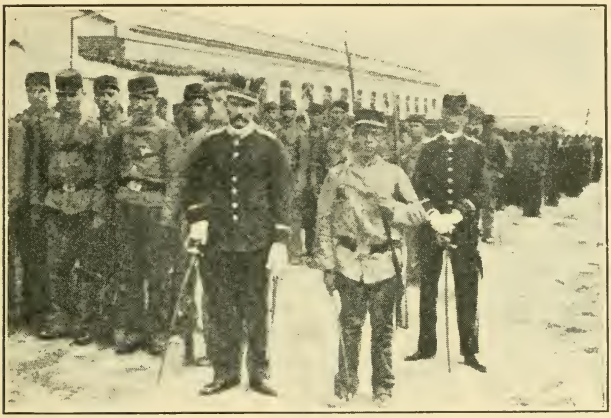
them an interest in one's eyes which their outward appearance does not warrant. Sentries are always at the doors and in the turret-like sentry boxes on the walls of the cuartels. There is a triangle of different tone in each of the boxes, and at night, when the corporal of the guard wishes to see if his men are awake, he strikes one, when each man has to answer by striking his own. As each triangle has a different sound, the corporal can tell whether any one has not answered. When one wakens in the middle of the night and hears the odd, sweet sound, like far away bells, it gives a feeling of security, that one is being watched over.

The military system of the country is excellent. Each citizen is required to bear arms, and every two months the personnel of the garrisons in the cuartels is changed, for new recruits are brought in and the old ones discharged. The names of all who have served are enrolled in a military register, and when needed can be called in promptly. The government has a supply of Remington and Mauser rifles sufficient for quite an army. Several years ago, when there was danger of war with Nicaragua, it armed and equipped about five thousand men in two or three weeks and sent them to the frontier.

In addition to the soldiers there are the police. They are a military organization; the men are selected from the army, and controlled

A STREET IN SAN JOSÉ

not by the municipality as in the United States, but by the government. They are mostly men of medium size, not giants like our policemen, yet in their neat blue uniforms, with Colt revolver on hip and heavy club, they present a business-like appearance and seem to perform their duties as efficiently and more



SOLDIERS READY TO START FOR THE NICARAGUAN FRONTIER

politely than those in our own cities. We doubt if any of our cities, except New York, is so well policed as San José. At night there is a policeman armed to the teeth, with rifle, revolver and machete, on duty at each street intersection in the main part of the city, and mounted officers go the rounds to see that the men are in their positions. This display of

armed force is not so much on account of thieves and assassins as to deter people from indulging in riot, rebellion and other like diversions. The present commandant of police, although a Costa Rican, is a graduate of Sandhurst, the English military school. He could have had a commission in the British army but preferred to return to his native land. There are two hundred men under his command in San José. He is an able officer, and since taking command has introduced a number of reforms and improvements.

For one thing, the Cuartel de Policia or police barracks, which the writer had the pleasure of visiting not long since, is now as clean and orderly as one of our military barracks in the United States. The night police were formerly armed with Winchester repeating rifles but the present commandant had them changed for single shot reformed Remingtons, as he considered these better for the class of men who were to use them. All the other large towns of the country have a police force similar to that of San José.

One can see signs of progress on all sides. The city is well lighted, having an electric arc lamp at each street intersection, and as the blocks are all short (one hundred Spanish yards) there are no dim spaces between far distant lights, as in many cities of the United States.

On public education, which is compulsory the

government has spent much money. There is a large metal school-house, capable of accommodating several hundred scholars, near the centre of the city and a number of smaller buildings in other districts. It is a pleasant sight to see groups of bright-faced children, with their satchels of books, trooping through the streets to school in the cool of the morning. Some are white and others of varying

VIEW OF THE "LICEO" AND THE NORMAL COLLEGE

shades of brown, according to the amount of Indian blood in their veins; the majority are neatly dressed and form a very respectable body of school-children.

In addition to the common schools, the government also supports a college for young men and one for young women and girls. The "Liceo" or men's college gives a good course of study and confers the degrees of B. S. and B. A.

The courses in the college for señoritas are

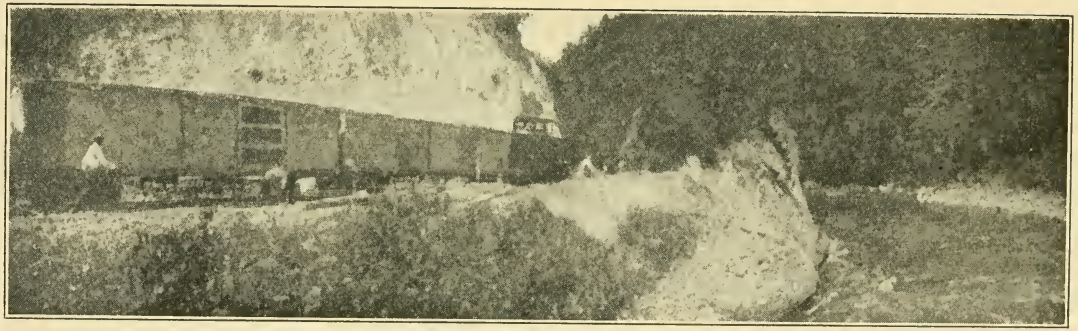
about equal to those of our high schools. This department occupies a substantial building, with large, airy, well-furnished class rooms.

As one rides out through the small villages and country districts he finds schools there also and begins to realize that something has been done to lift the people out their ignorance.* It is no sham effort. Ex-president Iglesias, who for eight years was at the head of the Costa Rican government (leaving office in May, 1902), and under whom much of the progress in education was made, was accustomed to boast that the country supported more school teachers than soldiers. When men of such character are at the head of affairs there is hope for a country.

We at home have been so in the habit of despising Latin countries, especially Spanish countries, that most of us have come to look on them as beyond hope, except for the regenerating touch of the Anglo-Saxon. For that reason the writer dwells on those points which show some indication of a healthy progress, of a start in the right direction. When one is looking for such things, it is easier to see them than when his eyes are blinded by the before-mentioned prejudice.

There are more signs of modern progress to be noted. The electric tramway, already re-

*In speaking of lifting the people out of their ignorance, the writer refers to the peon class, as the people of the upper class are as a rule well educated and of considerable culture, many of the wealthy planters sending their sons to Europe and the United States to be educated.



ON THE COSTA RICA RAILWAY

ferred to, runs the length of the city and a mile or two east and west into the country. The telegraph system, which is owned and operated by the government, reaches nearly all the towns and villages of the country. It gives fairly good service, at rates about half of what they are at home. Telephone lines, under private ownership, connect the principal towns, Cartago, Alajuela and Heredia, with the capital. These towns are lighted also by electric arc lamps. All of the electricity in the country is generated by water power, of which the numerous swift-running streams and rivers furnish an abundant supply.

The history of railroad building in Costa Rica is interesting.

The first railroad was built about thirty years ago. Strange to say, it did not start from the coast, but, passing through San José, ran from Alajuela to Cartago, fourteen miles west and east of the capital. All the material was hauled in oxcarts nearly fifty miles, over a mountain range and deep river valleys, to the beginning of the line. Senseless as this may seem, there was reason for it. Up to that time all freighting was done by oxcarts, from the Pacific coast, and the "boyeros" or oxcart men, formed a powerful element of the population. On account of their opposition to the railroad, the government, which was building it, took this way of pacifying them, and gave them the work of hauling the material.

Although the cost was immense, the road was built and put in operation, every bit of the machinery, rails and bridges being hauled in this way.

At about the same time a small bit of road, which is still being operated, was built from Puntarenas, the port on the Pacific coast, to Esparta, fourteen miles inland.

But the greatest task of all was the railroad from the Caribbean coast to San José. This was truly a tremendous undertaking, considering the difficulties that had to be overcome. These were not caused by hostile Indians, as in the building of our first Pacific railroad but by mighty Nature herself in the region where she is strongest and where men seem but pygmies. The road was commenced at the coast where the port of Limon now is, that spot being then but a wilderness. The government began the construction, but after building about forty miles, turned it over to Mr. Minor C. Keith, an American, now vice-president of the United Fruit Company, who succeeded in bringing English capital to the country to complete the work. The first twenty miles of the line is across the coast plain through tropical jungles and swamps. It is often said that this part cost one man for every tie. They died by scores and hundreds, carried off by the tropical fevers. The road, after crossing this plain, was built first along the open country, which skirts the

northern slopes of the volcanoes Turialba and Irazú, with the intention of running it up through a pass in the mountains to the height of San José. But when the line was completed to Carrillo, the point where the ascent began,

RIO GRANDE BRIDGE NEARING COMPLETION

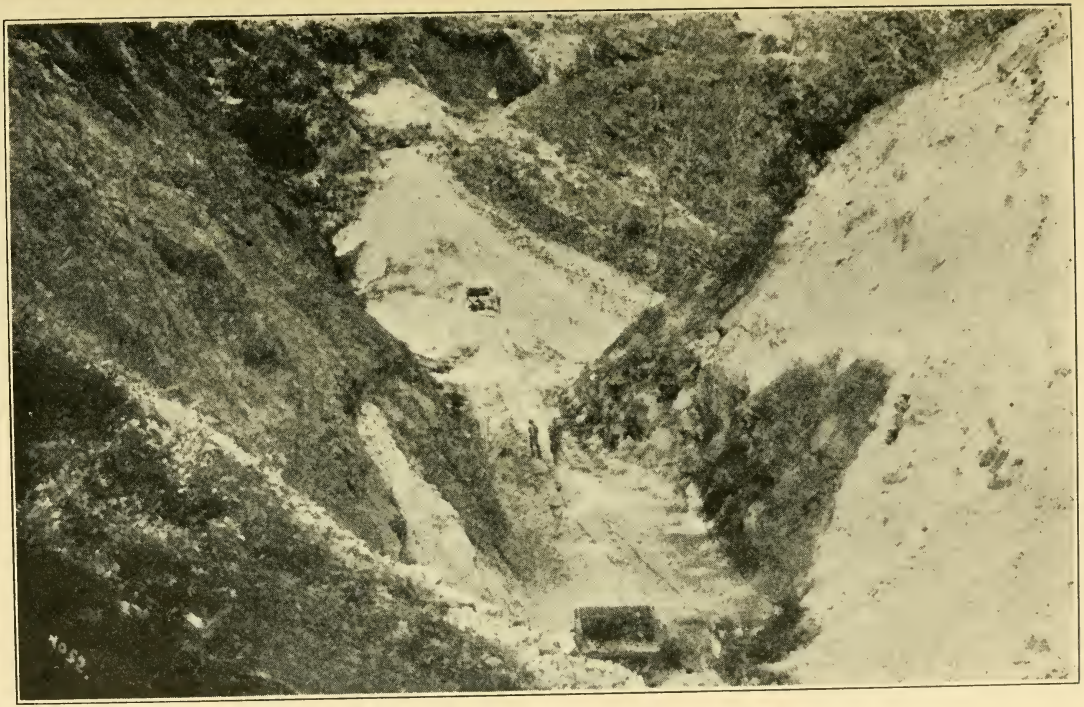
it was found impossible to control one of the rivers. This is a rapid mountain stream, fed by tremendous rains, and, where the railroad crosses it, the country is flat, having no high banks to hem it in. It sometimes changed its course in a single night, leaving the bridge

over a dry stream-bed and carrying away the railroad embankment on one side or the other.

Numerous attempts were made to overcome this difficulty, but the river, known as the Toro Amarillo, or Yellow Bull, was too unruly. After several bridges had been carried away,

THE RIO GRANDE BRIDGE, PACIFIC RAILROAD

the line had to be resurveyed up the other side of the mountain range from a point nearer the coast. It was tremendously heavy work, great cuts and fills that kept sliding in and washing away under the terrific rains following one after another. At one place a whole mountain side kept sliding down and carrying



HEAVY WORK ON THE PACIFIC RAILROAD

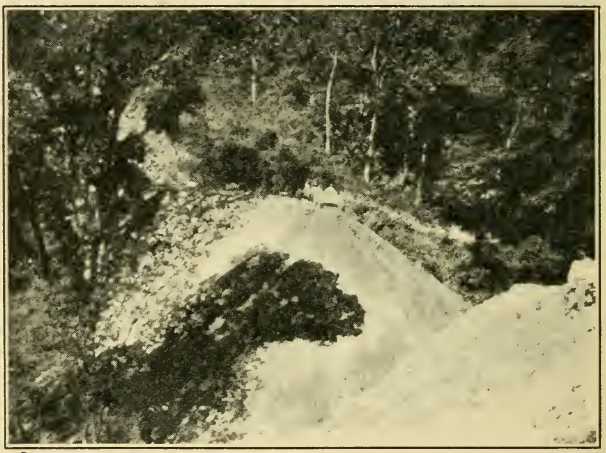
the road-bed with it into the river below.

As the traveller crosses one of the numerous iron bridges, he can see a masonry pier standing alone some forty feet to one side of the bridge. The pier was formerly under it, but some earthquake shock or other cause carried the whole stream-bed, pier and all, down that distance.

In spite of all these difficulties, the road was finally completed. Sometimes funds were so scarce that the laborers had to wait for their pay. Mr. Keith frequently had to ride into camps and face crowds of mutinous, discontented men, oftentimes making threats against his life, but so great was his influence over them, and such the confidence which he inspired, that after a few cheering words he would ride away leaving them contented and willing to continue their work, trusting his word for their pay. That the road was finally finished was due almost entirely to his indomitable courage and persistency. He seemed to bear a charmed life, passing unscathed through the dangers of desperate men, of fever camps, poisonous snakes, and rapidly rising rivers, to which hundreds, perhaps thousands, succumbed; in outward appearance, however, he is merely a well-groomed, pleasant looking gentleman, of medium size, yet with wonderfully brilliant and piercing brown eyes.

In 1897 the Costa Rican government commenced building from San José to the Pacific

coast a railroad known as the "Ferrocarril al Pacifico" or Pacific Railroad. The contract was let to an American citizen, an Ohio man, at an estimated cost of something over three million dollars, American gold. This is not the first Pacific railroad with which he has been con-

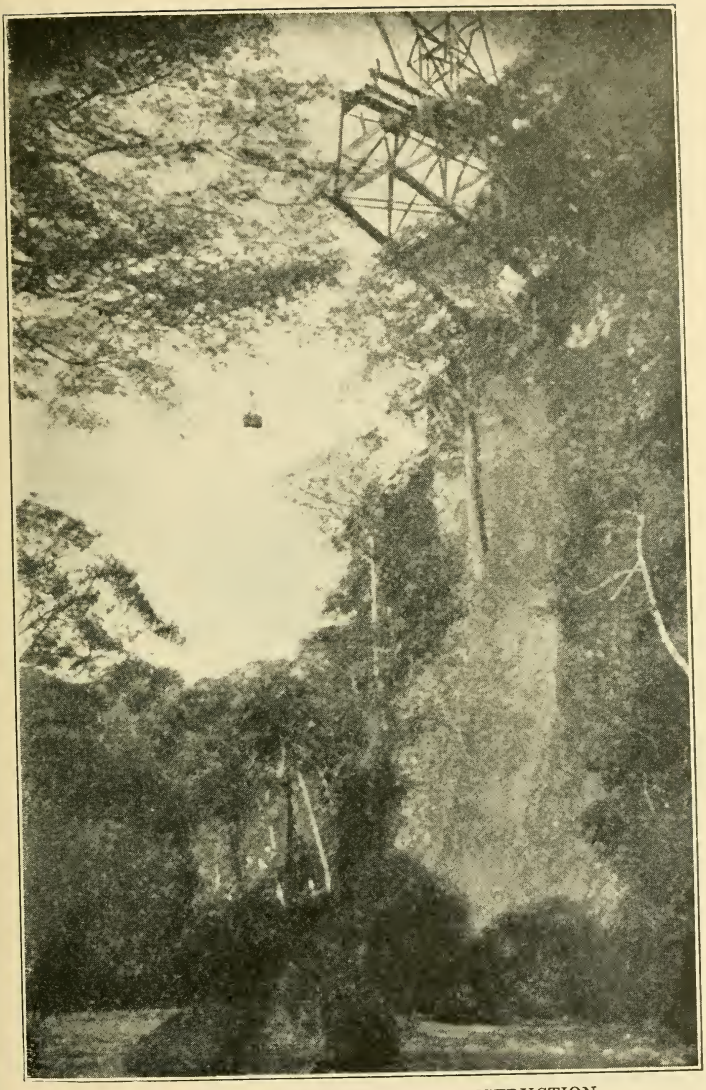


A FILL ON THE PACIFIC RAILROAD

nected, for he was prominently identified with the building of the Union Pacific.

Although the contract was let to a foreigner, the road has been built according to the specifications laid down by the government, and under the supervision of Costa Rican engineers.

The location was largely made by a Costa Rican, Don Alberto Gonzalez who has been



RIO GRANDE BRIDGE DURING CONSTRUCTION

chief engineer for the government during the construction. American engineers say that he located the road well.

Unfortunately the work was stopped when the railroad reached Santo Domingo, a village about twenty miles from the coast, for the government felt temporarily unable to carry it on; but undoubtedly it will be completed within two or three years.

In February, 1903, the contractor turned over the completed part which the government is now operating. There is no lack of passenger and freight traffic, and it appears that the road will earn an interest on the investment.

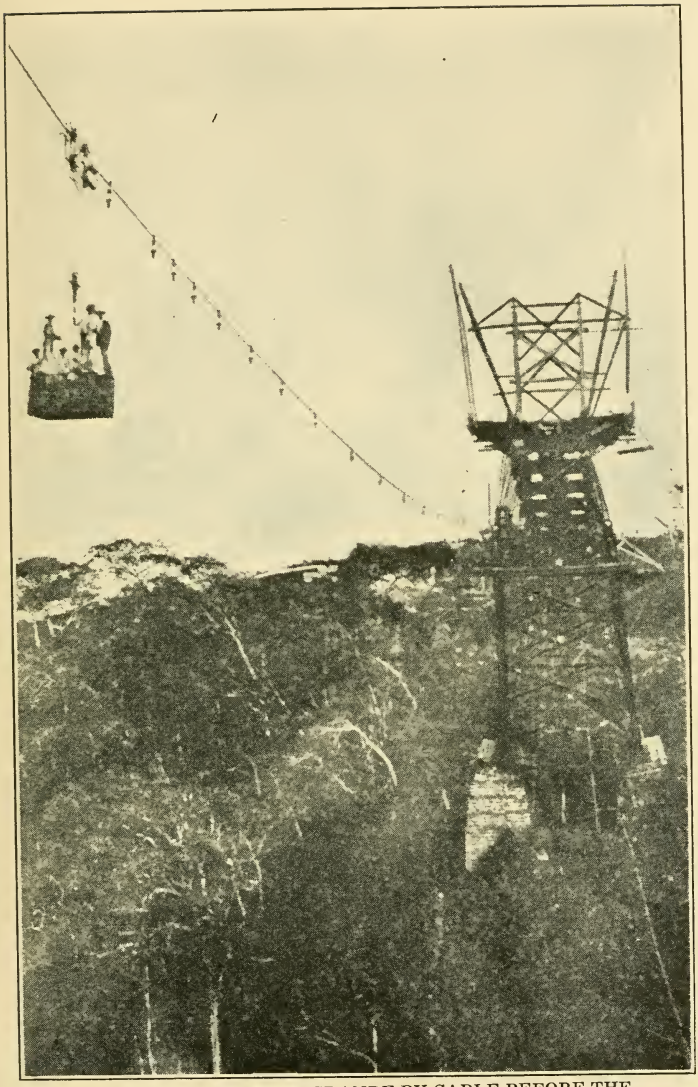
The construction has been a long and tedious affair, for nothing moves very quickly in the tropics, except fevers and death, and the government has been too poor to push the work. There is no cheap railroad building in a country like Costa Rica. The mountains are so steep and their sides are so furrowed with deep ravines separated by narrow ridges that heavy cuts and fills cannot be avoided, and as the numerous rivers have deep valleys, many large bridges have to be built. In the first twenty-four miles of the Pacific Railroad, there are seven iron bridges, four of which are over a hundred feet high; the highest of the four is three hundred and twelve feet from the rails to the water level. This last bridge spans the Rio Grande, and at the time it was erected

was the only one of its kind. It is a combination of the cantilever and the arch and was built out into space from each side of the gorge, without any false-work to support it, and has a clear span of 450 feet. Considering that the two ends were joined together without being more than a fraction of an inch out of measurement, and that not a single life was lost nor a single man seriously injured, it is a credit to American bridge engineering and to the skill of those who erected it.

From the Rio Grande the line goes turning and twisting like a snake about the folds of the Aguacate Mountains, yet following the valley of the river, which here flows in a westerly direction on its way to the Pacific.

For about seventeen miles the work is very heavy. Some of the cuts are more than a hundred feet deep on the upper side, and there are many fills of sixty and eighty feet in height. The road has not presented such great difficulties as the one to the Caribbean coast, but there have been enough. In the rainy seasons there were a great many slides in the cuts, and some of the fills were nearly destroyed. Much of this part of the line was completed for three years or more before the track was laid on it and became so overgrown with bushes, undergrowth and even trees, that one in riding over it would hardly think it was a completed road-bed.

Owing to the fact that the work was started



CROSSING THE RIO GRANDE BY CABLE BEFORE THE COMPLETION OF THE BRIDGE

from San José and has not reached the coast plain, fevers have not had to be contended with, and only a few lives have been lost from sickness.

Almost all the manual labor has been performed by native Costa Ricans, who on the whole have proved good workers. The peons (which in Spanish simply means laborers) need to be handled in a certain way to get good results. They resent rough talk, so that some of the American foremen, who were in the habit of cursing their men, had to learn their business over again. The peons when they were sworn at laid down their tools and went home; call it Spanish pride or what you will, they will work for no one that they think is calling them bad names.

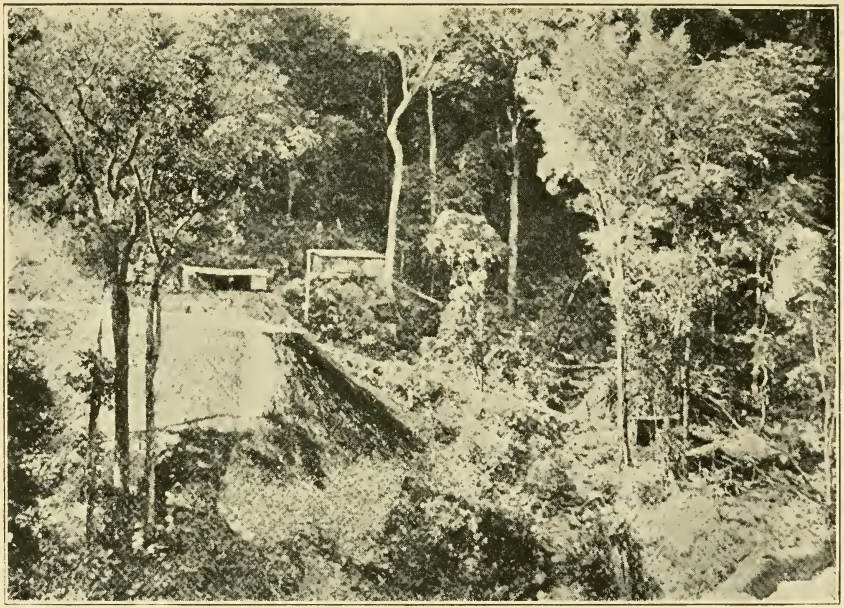
The workmen board themselves and provide their own sleeping quarters in the railroad camps. The contractor usually supplies each man with a few sheets of corrugated iron for a roof, and the peon does the rest. Their huts are very simple. They do not use a single nail in constructing them, but bind the timbers together with "bejucos," the pliant vines that grow on the trees in the tropical forest. The vines can be found in all sizes, from stout ropes to small cords, and the peons put them to all manner of uses.

One of these railroad camps in the mountains is an interesting place on a pay night, and rather trying to the nerves of a "tender-

foot" who is not used to the ways of the country.

The men come in from all sides, with long machetes on hip, colored sashes about their waists, uttering blood-curdling whoops and screams which seem to forbode violence and bloodshed. But they are rather signs of pleasure and contentment than anything else. To be sure, they fight more or less among themselves, especially when under the influence of the native brandy or "guaro" made from sugar-cane. But all things considered they are not a dangerous people, and respond readily to fair treatment. One is safer among them than he would be in a crowd of New York toughs, for they are a distinct lower class and have an inborn respect for a "señor," one who belongs to a higher social grade. At the same time they are independent, for many of them have their own patch of land which they cultivate, or an assured position on some rich man's coffee hacienda. If not satisfied therefore with things on the railroad work, they return to their own. A peon can live comfortably on what an American would call starvation wages, and is as a rule a happy-go-lucky individual, seeming to let the morrow take thought for the things of itself.

Even on the coffee plantations, or haciendas, he is not bound to the soil by debt as seems to be the case in Mexico and some other Spanish-American countries. The proprietor fur-



A RAILROAD CAMP IN THE MOUNTAINS

nishes him with a house—or more properly speaking a hut—to live in, and also his firewood, in return for which the peon must work at the current wages for the proprietor when he needs him. When the work, which is principally in the coffee-picking season, is over, the peon is free to go and work where he will until needed again.

Besides the peons, Costa Rica is fortunate in having an industrious and frugal middle class of small farmers who own land, houses and oxen. Most of them live in the plainest possible way, go barefooted like the peons, dwell in houses with dirt floors, and eat very little else than rice, black beans, eggs and plantains; yet many of them have comparatively large sums of money in the bank. It is from this class that the boyeros or oxcart men are largely drawn. They are a rugged independent set, earning very good wages.

From San José to Puntarenas, the port on the Pacific coast, there is an old highway which, before the building of the Costa Rica railway, the one to the Caribbean, was the only means of communication between the coast and the interior, except some narrow trails. Until the completion of the Pacific railroad to Santo Domingo all merchandise entering or leaving the country by way of Puntarenas traversed this road in oxcarts, and even yet it has to go in that way from Santo Domingo to Esparta, about fifteen miles. Old

residents say that years ago the road was in such good condition that one could ride comfortably in a carriage the whole distance from the capital to the coast, but since the opening of the Costa Rica railway, the government has allowed it to fall into a bad state of repair. The oxcarts and the rains have continued the work of destruction. Even now, however, it is partly stone-paved and is good enough for travellers on horseback or for oxcarts. It gives evidence of having been at one time a fine road that must have cost a great deal of money.

The phases of life to be seen in travelling over this highway are most interesting. One would think he had gone back a hundred years if it were not for the roadside telegraph line, which is about the only thing that reminds him that he is living in the age of modern inventions. He meets travelers on horseback with revolvers strapped about them, saddlebags and blanket rolls behind their saddles; caravans of lumbering oxcarts laden with freight, cowboys with herds of cattle on their way to the interior, and peons in short jackets with the ever present machete hanging from their belts. The entire distance between San José and Esparta is marked off in kilometers by iron posts, having the distance from each place lettered on them. Every twenty-two kilometers throughout the whole route is a town or village where travellers stop for

SOME OF THE PACIFIC RAILROAD BUILDERS

breakfast or to spend the night at little old-fashioned inns. Although unpretentious looking places, they are fairly clean and supply a sufficiently good meal.

That these towns are all about the same distance apart is said to be because twenty-two kilometers is a day's journey, in an oxcart. The old settlers camped at these places at the end of their day's journey and afterwards the villages grew up there. Those persons who are fond of the "good old days" as they are called and like old-fashioned ways would certainly enjoy a trip on horseback over this old highway. About twenty-five miles from San José the traveller, who has passed over a fairly level but gradually descending country, comes to the valley or cañon of the Rio Grande. The road goes down four or five hundred feet, crosses the river on an old stone bridge of a single arch, then climbs up perhaps a greater distance on the other side. In fact, after leaving the river valley, it ascends all the way to Atenas, a pleasant village nestled among the folds of the Aguacate Mountains. From here the road climbs up over this range, which is about four thousand feet high. The summit is often enveloped in clouds and the traveller rides through white mist that shuts off the view. If, however, the day is clear he gets a prospect that is worth going a long way to see. Below him the white road zigzags down the green mountain side until

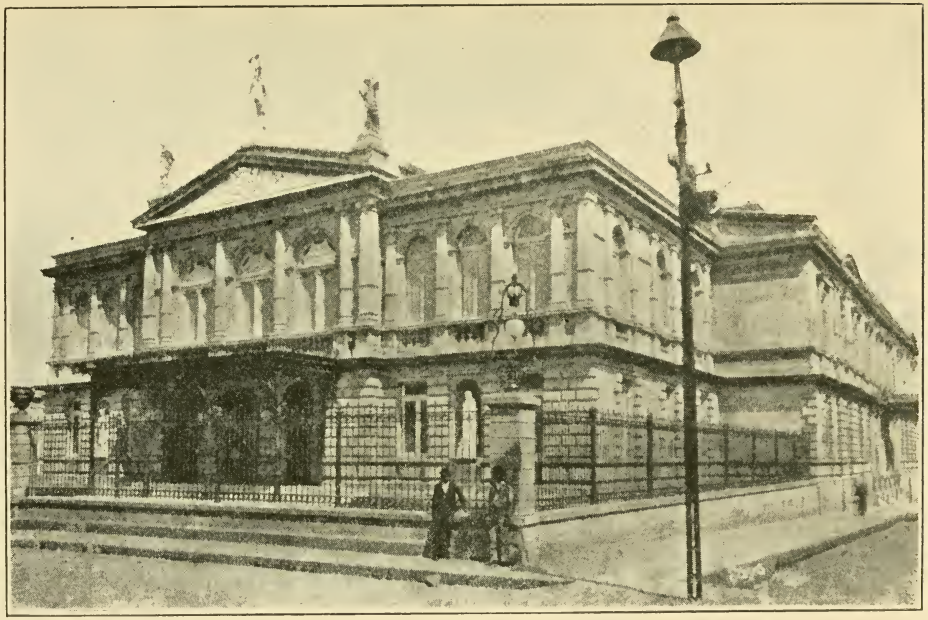
it reaches the villages of San Mateo and Santo Domingo lying just beyond the foot-hills at the beginning of the coast plain, which descends gently from there to the sea. The beautiful Gulf of Nicoya and the blue Pacific, edged here and there with white, where the great ocean surges are breaking on some rocky point, lie smiling in the sun.

Puntarenas, on its long sand spit with its anchored vessels and the coast line for many miles can be seen as clearly as though it were a map. The traveller must be in a great hurry if he does not spend some minutes looking at the magnificent panorama.

Costa Rica, no matter where one goes, is a land of beautiful views. One rarely takes even a short ride without stopping to gaze at the altered aspect of some mountain, changed by the new point of view, or at the beauty of some deep wild river valley, or the quiet picturesqueness of an old stone bridge over a clear, swift-running stream.

There is a charm to life in such a place whether in the city or in the country, and it is a matter of remark among the foreign residents that anyone who has come under its spell for a year or two never gets entirely over it, but always has a desire to return, as did those Greeks who found the land of the lotus eaters.

San José, although a small city, probably not having more than thirty thousand in-



THE NATIONAL THEATRE

habitants, is a capital and a metropolis in miniature. It is the governing and the business centre of the republic. The government is equipped with all the machinery of that of a much larger country. There is a house of congress, cabinet ministers, a bureau of statistics, a government printing office, where all official reports and documents are printed, a national theatre, owned and managed by the government, and an office of public works which has charge of public improvements and such undertakings as the Pacific Railroad.

There is something of a diplomatic corps, for the United States and several Spanish-American republics are represented by ministers, while nearly all the great nations have consuls to look after the interests of their subjects residing in the country.

There are several foreign colonies. The Spanish is the largest, although the American, English, Italian, German and French are not far behind. One becomes quite a cosmopolitan after residing a year or two in San José, for he comes in daily contact with all these nationalities. A goodly proportion of the foreigners are people of education, belonging to the middle or upper classes of Europe or elsewhere.

Spanish, being the language of the country, is the medium of communication among all these nationalities and is also the language of business. Next to that, English is most

spoken, yet any one who thinks of coming to these countries to engage in business should not cherish the idea that it is sufficient for him. To make the most of his opportunities he should know Spanish and know it well, for it is the language spoken from the southern boundary of the United States clear to Cape Horn.

For one who has a comfortable income or an assured salary there is much to make life pleasant in San José. One attraction is the national theatre. The writer hardly expects to be believed when he states that it is as handsome and well appointed as any theatre in New York. Although it is of only medium size, having a seating capacity of about 1,000, all the decorations and appointments are of the best. It was built and is managed by the government. Though, when looked at in the cold light of common sense, it may seem a most foolish expenditure of the public funds, these people are of a different race from our own and have different ideas of what is worth while. The theatre is built of stone, iron and marble, and is earthquake proof as all buildings should be in a country like Costa Rica. Skilled workmen and artists were brought from Italy to build and decorate it, a task which took several years. It cost nearly $600,000 American gold.

There are many frescoes upon the walls and ceilings, all of which are of a high order of

A WILD VALLEY

excellence. The foyer is very beautiful, having an inlaid hard wood floor, carved marble wainscoting and pillars and handsome decoration in bas relief on the walls.

On the ground floor are restaurants and cafés where the playgoers refresh themselves during the long intermissions. The theatre is also equipped with a good electric plant of its own, and is well lighted. What most surprises a stranger is to find such a beautiful play house in a country which he has probably always thought of as only half civilized. Unfortunately, as San José is but a small city, the theatre is closed for the greater part of the year; still for two or three months each season one can hear opera or drama. Some of the opera troupes are excellent and would compare favorably with those at the French opera house in New Orleans.

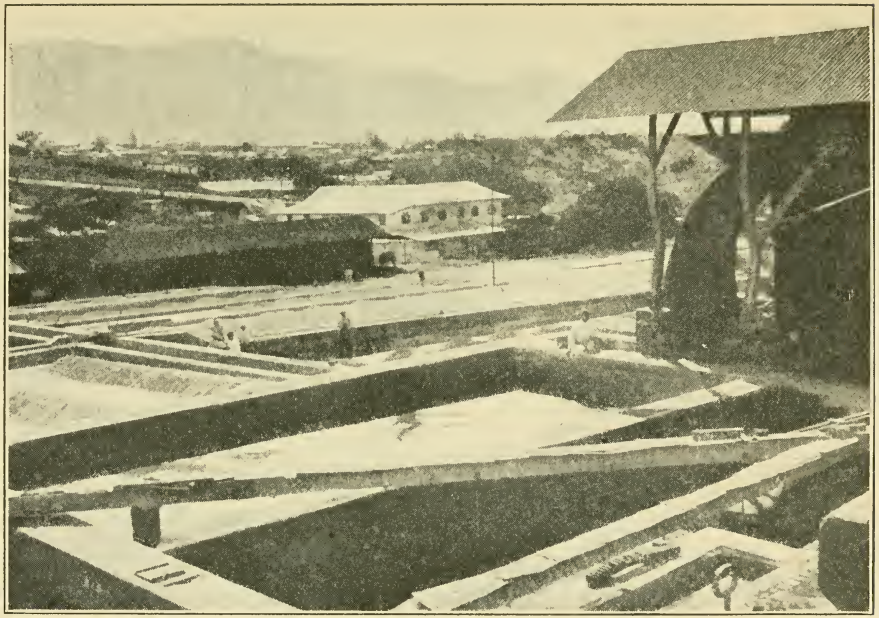
The citizens also get some of their money's worth out of the theatre in another way. Official banquets and balls are given here, and as the floor where the orchestra chairs are placed is so arranged that it can be raised to the level of the stage, the place makes a magnificent banqueting hall or ballroom.

If a tourist from the north, one of those who come expecting to find a country of Indians and half-breeds, were to happen in on one of these occasions he might fancy himself in New York, except for the number of dark-faced men and women and other bits of local color.

Another of the charms of life in San José is the nearness of the country. A ten minutes' walk in almost any direction will take one out among coffee plantations and green pastures where cattle are grazing, for the city, like all Spanish towns, is very compactly built. There are no smoking chimneys or grimy factories to mar the landscape, for Costa Rica is almost entirely an agricultural and pastoral country. To be sure the newly arrived "tenderfoot" from the north may find some unlovely sights that interfere with the Arcadian charm, perhaps a swarm of black vultures devouring a dead horse or cow, or perhaps some drunken peons fighting with machetes. If he leaves the highroad and goes blundering about among the thickets and bushes he may get "coloradillas"* or "niguas"† in his feet. Nevertheless all these things should not disturb him, especially if he be of an artistic temperament for he will regard them as part of the local color of the place.

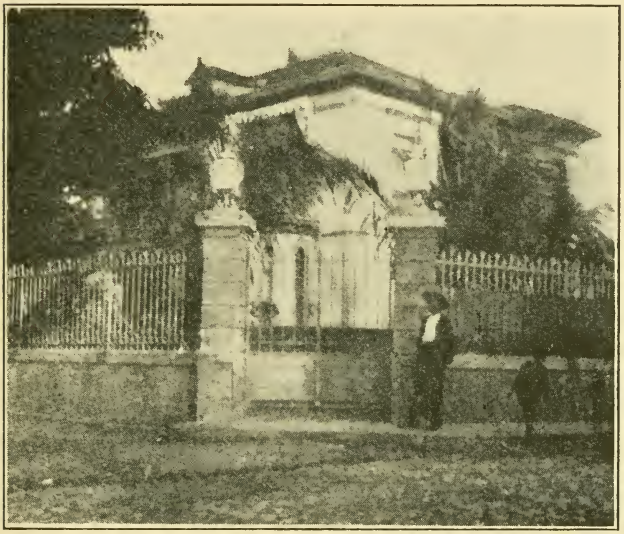
There is considerable foreign capital in Costa Rica,—American, English, French and German, and more is coming. It is a good country in which to invest money if the enterprise itself be safe. The government and the educated classes look upon it with favor and protect it. It is as safe as in the United States. The revolutions or revolutionary uprisings interrupt business no more than does an election

*A small insect known as a chigger in the southern states.
†An insect known by the name of jigger in the south and west.



A COFFEE BENEFICIO NEAR SAN JOSÉ

at home. Even if successful, they are no more than a change in the governing powers. There are usually a few men killed, but they are almost always interested parties who ran the risk voluntarily.



A RESIDENCE IN SAN JOSÉ

The Costa Rica Railway Company, Limited, the road to the Caribbean, represents an investment of between two and three million pounds sterling of English capital. The Tramway Company of San José, with the electric lighting service which it also operates, represents another £300,000.

The United Fruit Company, the great American corporation engaged in growing and selling tropical fruits, which owns extensive plantations in several different republics, has over five thousand men on its pay rolls in Costa Rica, and ships from twenty to thirty thousand bunches of bananas daily from Port Limon.

There is some American capital invested in gold mines, with the prospect that the amount may be greatly increased. Germans and Frenchmen have invested quite extensively in coffee plantations and beneficios. The largest wholesale stores in the country are in the hands of Germans. The principal banking institution is the "Banco de Costa Rica." It is entirely a native enterprise, being financed and managed by Costa Ricans, and is the place of deposit for government funds. It occupies a substantial building of stone and marble in the central part of the city.

Commercial transactions are made easier and safer by the fact that the monetary system is stable. Costa Rica is on the gold basis; the unit of value is the colon, worth exactly forty-six cents in American gold. The gold standard was put in force in 1900, during the administration of Don Rafael Iglesias and was due more to his efforts than to those of any other one man. He is one of the most progressive men that Central America has produced, and although he has had but a small

A STREET SCENE, SAN JOSÉ

stage on which to play his part, is a statesman of more than ordinary talents. The Pacific Railroad and various other undertakings can be put to his credit also. But like some of the prophets of old, he is not appreciated in his own country. Since he left office, he has been the object of bitter and humiliating attacks from his personal and political enemies, and has even found it necessary to fight a duel.

Nevertheless with all these material and practical advantages, Costa Rica in common with the other Spanish-American republics, is a land of adventure and dramatic events. There are plots and intrigues, duels, midnight assaults on castle-like cuartels,—fugitives from justice in the United States or Europe flee here for refuge, as they used to go to our western frontier; exiles from neighboring republics who may have headed an unsuccessful revolution come by sea or land to save their lives from the hand of some wrathful dictator; adventurers and gold seekers from the western states drift in to stake their all on a last chance, willing to leave their bones if unsuccessful.

The spell that swayed the Spanish conquerors, and led them through tropical swamps and jungles and over almost impassable mountain ranges in search of El Dorado, still hangs over these lands. Men are still risking their lives searching for the gold that they believe to be hidden away somewhere in the tropical

wilderness, and the air is full of tales of buried treasure, lost mines, and fabulously rich veins of quartz that somewhere off in the mountains are yet awaiting the fortunate finder.

The future of these countries must be of interest to anyone who has lived in them. Up to the present the great tides of human life have swept by them unheedingly. They are comparatively unknown to the great horde of travellers and tourists that traverse Europe, the United States and the far East.

The constantly recurring revolutions, the internecine wars and the fevers of the tropical coasts have given them an evil fame throughout the world. The idea is growing in Europe as well as in the United States that they are not fit to govern themselves but must eventually be taken under the wing of some strong power that can give them a stable government. Yet if all of them were as peaceful and progressive as little Costa Rica, they would soon loose that evil fame and would cease to be a reproach to the country that bore them.

However, if any European power should undertake to conquer such a country as Columbia or Venezuela, it is safe to say that it would have a greater task than had England in South Africa. Each republic has a population of about three million, instead of the three hundred thousand odd of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The people are

THE BANK OF COSTA RICA

used to warfare and bloodshed and with all their faults are not lacking in courage, while the natural difficulties to be encountered by an invading army would be greater than those of South Africa. The mountain ranges are high and precipitous; there are impenetrable jungles and on the coast a European army would lose thousands of men from fevers and other diseases.

An American in any Central or South American city is often impressed by the tone of unfriendly suspicion and veiled hostility displayed by the local papers, and even by individuals, when speaking of the United States. It seems strange considering our stand on the Monroe Doctrine and our other friendly acts. It is doubtless partly the fear of the weak for the strong, but when one ponders over the facts of history, he may conclude that there is some ground for this feeling. The Anglo-Saxon race has diminished Spanish dominions considerably. As far back as the sixteenth century the English began to prune for their own profit the great Spanish empire. British Honduras, British Guiana and all of the West Indies once belonged to Spain. We Americans have also taken a hand in the pleasant pastime. We took from Mexico, a Spanish country, more territory than is at present comprised within her boundaries. To be sure we afterwards paid her some millions of dollars for it, yet the transaction is rather like going

into a man's house, kicking him out, and at one's own time and pleasure paying what one thinks best.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American war, we solemnly declared that we were simply going to right a wrong and had no desire to acquire territory. Nevertheless, we politely relieved Spain of all her colonies of any consequence. No matter how good our reasons may have been for doing so it has not increased the affection of Spaniards or Spanish-Americans for us.

What concerns them is that the Anglo-Saxon is gradually encroaching upon the Spanish-speaking nations.

We are apt to think of the Spanish race as cruel, treacherous and blood-thirsty. They also have an opinion of us. They think us cold, calculating and hypocritical, always seeking the almighty dollar. There may be some grain of truth in each opinion. Perhaps we do see the finger of God pointing us along the paths of our own interests, even as some ministers of the Gospel can hear the voice of the Lord calling them to a higher salary.

This suspicious fear of us will account for some of their actions.

The rejection of the canal treaty last year by the Colombian Congress was not altogether a game of "graft" as so many newspapers have claimed. Many Colombians feared that the canal strip would prove to be the entering

wedge and that little by little we would absorb the rest of their country. The Colombian colony in Costa Rica sent a cablegram to the congress while it was in session at Bogotá, begging it to save the national honor and in-

A BANANA PLANTATION

tegrity by reforms in the canal treaty. The careless speeches and even the writings of some American travellers have not allayed this feeling. Take for instance some of the opinions expressed by the writer already referred to. In his article on Central America he says:

"The Central American citizen is no more fit for a republican form of government than he is for an Arctic expedition, and what he needs is to have a protectorate established over him, either by the United States or by another power; it does not matter which, so long as it leaves the Nicaragua canal in our hands."

A little further on he also says: "The Central Americans are like a gang of semi-barbarians in a beautifully furnished house, of which they can understand neither its possibilities of comfort nor its use. They are the dogs in the manger among nations."

Is it any wonder that Spanish-Americans are rather suspicious of our ultimate intentions, and are prone to look on the Monroe Doctrine as a smiling mask behind which we are merely awaiting our own good time to come and benevolently assimilate them?

The time is approaching, perhaps has already arrived, when Spanish-America will emerge from its obscurity and occupy a larger place on the world's stage. For Costa Rica that time will come with the building of the Panama Canal. When that great work is well under way she will cease to be an isolated, unknown country.

She will be next door to one of the great trade routes of the world. She will sell her food products to feed the thousands of laborers employed on the construction, her cool high-

lands will become a place of refuge and recuperation for fever-wasted men, and the charms of San José will become known.

It is safe to say that her future will be brighter than her past has been.

Cuentos Ticos

(Costa Rican Stories)

By

Ricardo Feránndez Guardia

Author's Note:

To the reader who does not know that in Central America the inhabitants of Guatemala are called "Chopines," those of Salvador and Honduras "Guanacos," those of Nicaragua "Nicos" and "Pinolios," and the Costa Ricans "Ticos," the title of this book will be unintelligible. The author has chosen it as the most appropriate for a work which from its character is not intended to overstep the boundaries of the little fatherland, Costa Rica, or at most those of our larger fatherland, Central America.

EL ESTRENO

(THE DÉBUT.)

AS the clock struck four, Don Gregorio Lopez, second civil judge of the province of San José, folded up with one motion the judicial papers he was studying, and pushing back the leather covered armchair in which his thin person rested daily during the appointed hours, stretched himself vigorously, extending his arms like a cross and clinching his fists, while his mouth opened wide in a long yawn which moistened his eyes. The hour for going had arrived, a blessed hour for scholars and officials. Don Gregorio stood up and finished stretching himself on tiptoe, as though to awaken the muscles of his legs, asleep from such long inactivity. Then he took three steps toward the wall, where on a rack hung his hat, of majestic, judicial form, which he put on almost to his ears, according to the old custom, for the judge belonged to the generation now almost passed away, which wears its hat tilted back and its waistcoat half buttoned.

Armed with an immense umbrella, capable of serving as a shelter to a family in case of

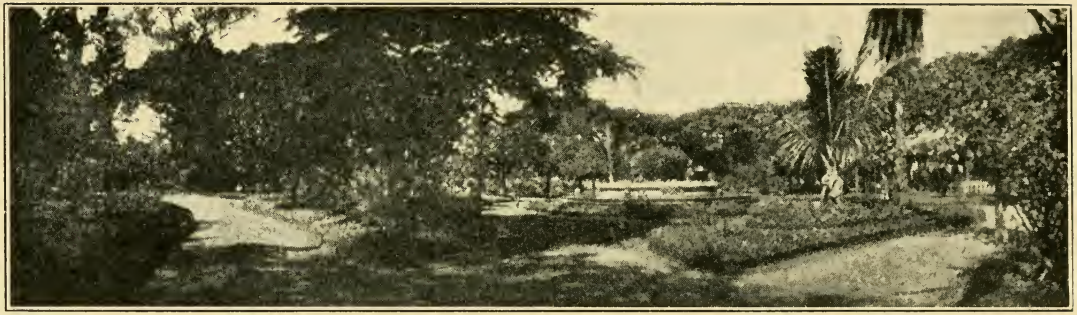
need, he started, passing through the office of the secretary of the court, of whom, and of the clerks, he took his leave with an affectionate "hasta mañana."*

In the corridors he ran across Juan Blas the porter, who was vexed on seeing that already almost all of his colleagues had gained their liberty, but Don Gregorio Lopez was a chronometer, a man of scrupulous conscience, who would not skimp his time or work. When he was about to set foot in the street he heard a familiar voice which asked from the vestibule, "What is God doing with that life of yours, Don Gregorio?" The judge turned to answer the salute of Don Cirilo Vargas, Magistrate of the Court of Casacion.† The two men of the law clasped hands, and after affectionate inquiries from each about the condition of their respective families, they went on together to the corner of the Palace of Justice, where they paused to converse a while. After a little they separated with another hand shake, Don Cirilo going in the direction of the market and the judge with much haste towards the Central Park, because it was threatening rain and he lived far off in the plaza of la Soledad. But he had walked only a few steps, when turning about suddenly, he called:

"Don Cirilo; Don Cirilo!"

He of the Casacion stopped in an expectant attitude, but Don Gregorio who was advancing

*Until to-morrow.
†Appeals.



IN THE CENTRAL PARK, SAN JOSÉ

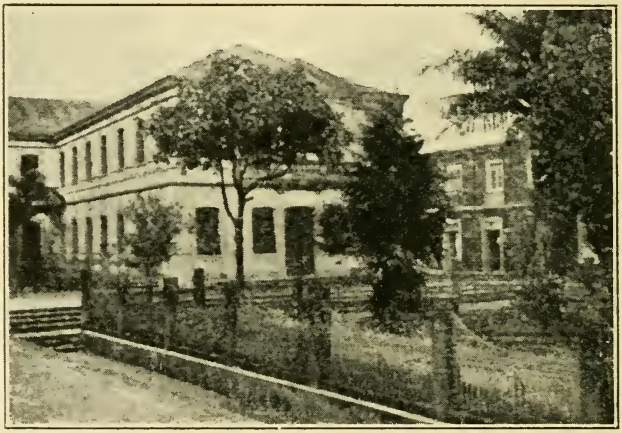
with an air visibly perplexed and bothered, stopped again, saying, "It is nothing, Don Cirilo, pardon me for calling you. I wanted to consult you about something that perplexes me, but there is no hurry; some other day, for the rain is coming on us now."

"When you wish; I am always at your service," replied the magistrate.

The judge thanked him and continued on his way hurriedly, for the sky was clouding up more and more. Don Gregorio was not only in a great hurry that afternoon, but also in a devilish humor. As he traversed the Central Park, deserted on account of the approaching rain storm, he let loose two or three imprecations and some bits of that about which he was meditating: "Cursed woman! What a passion for making me ridiculous!" Then a little later when he was passing by the side of the Bishop's Palace he stopped and exclaimed: "I *won't* say it to Don Cirilo." This violent resolution seemed to calm him a little. As some large drops were beginning to fall which sounded loud on the neighboring tileroofs, he took out his umbrella, which he was carrying under his arm, and commenced to walk with all the speed possible to his poor legs, grown old in the chairs of twenty public offices, and to an ingrowing toenail, which was one of the torments of his life.

When he reached home all the cataracts of the sky precipitated themselves upon the capi-

tal, a circumstance which stirred up his ire anew, because he had such a horror of wetting himself that evil tongues asserted that, since the day of his baptism, water had not touched him. Although it is probable that in this there might be some exaggeration, it is certain that Don Gregorio believed firmly in the national saying that "earth on the body is better than the body in the earth." This he



THE BISHOP'S PALACE

never forgot to repeat to his daughter Aurelia whenever he heard her splashing about in the bathroom. When he was under cover, the judge commenced by putting his enormous umbrella, from the point of which issued a fountain, to dry in the corridor.* Next he changed his wet boots for some canvas slip-

*The gallery or covered walk about the patio or courtyard of Spanish-American houses is known as the corridor.

pers. Then, wondering at not seeing his wife or daughter ready to aid him in these important operations, he went to look for them where they were accustomed to sew. The room was empty.

Little, or more correctly, no desire had the judge of seeing his wife at that time, since she was the cause of his bad humor; nevertheless as the unaccustomed absence of the ladies at the dinner hour surprised him, he went to the kitchen to learn of their whereabouts from the servants. There he learned from Ramona, a robust maiden from Curridabat,* who suspended her kitchen tasks to inform him, that Doña Catalina and the young lady Aurelia had gone shopping, taking the maid servant with them. It would seem natural that, on learning what he wanted to know, Don Gregorio would retire from the kitchen; nevertheless, one must suppose that he did not so intend since he remained in the same spot looking with manifest pleasure at the plump charms of the maiden. For Ramona was a very pretty girl. Her eyes, large and full, were not lacking in mischief; her very abundant blue black hair was in two handsome braids; her mouth was pretty, her teeth white; and her brown skin, smooth and lustrous, showed the Indian blood of her ancestors.

The judge looked admiringly at her firm breast and well-rounded arms, which emerged

*A village near San José.

bare from the low-necked and short-sleeved garment of her class. All his life he had been very partial to plump women, or at least well rounded ones, and such had been Doña Catalina when he married her. However as time passed, cruel and mocking Destiny had taken a hand in the matter in the form of dyspepsia, and she who had formerly been shapely and rosy had now become thin and yellow like a bit of macaroni. Ramona, whom the breezes of San José had sharpened considerably, doubtless read some audacious thought in the brilliant pupils of the judge, since she directed a glance at him which made him understand that he was in a bad posture and that his dignity was in peril. Without waiting more he turned about.

"Do you wish me to serve dinner?" said the girl politely, on seeing him go away. "Doña Catalina cannot come before it clears up."

"No, thank you. I shall wait until the ladies return."

Don Gregorio marched to the bedroom of his wife, which was also his, and taking out a key from the bottom of a porcelain flower bowl opened with it a wardrobe of Spanish cedar, of monumental proportions. The judge disappeared completely within that venerable piece of family furniture, but soon emerged again, with a bottle in one hand and a glass in the other. After taking a scrutinizing glance, as though to make sure nobody saw

him, he filled the cup to the brim and drank it at one gulp.

In that act, seemingly innocent, Don Gregorio Lopez, second civil judge of the province of San José, had committed a misdemeanor punishable by Article 473 of the Fiscal Code of 1885. The liquid which the bottle contained was contraband brandy, with which a friend and comrade from Puriscal kept him constantly supplied. One can be a model official, an hon-

IN THE PATIO OF A PRIVATE RESIDENCE

est judge, and a man of chastity, and at the same time be unable to resist the seduction of a little glass of contraband "Guaro"* or of a little cigar of "Chircagre."†

An example of this was Don Gregorio, who, while he had been able to defend himself against the terrible temptation of plump firm flesh, preserving the fidelity owed to his very thin Catalina, was never able to conquer his tyrannical appetite for contraband brandy. Less strong than that had been his profound

*Native brandy made from sugar cane.
†A famous tobacco formerly grown and sold against the law.

respect for the law, the voice of his conscience, and even the fear inspired by his wife who had lost no chance of condemning such a shameful weakness. All that she could gain was that he should concede to her the custody of the exquisite liquor, to avoid that her husband's irresistible inclination should degenerate with abuse into a vice. For this reason he was kept on a ration; a dram in the morning, and a dram in the afternoon before dinner to give an appetite. Doña Catalina herself measured the pittance, and in spite of the protests of the interested party she always found a way to skimp it a little. That afternoon, traitorously taking advantage of his wife's absence, the judge had served himself with the large spoon. Nor was this the worst, since, encouraged by the good success of his first exploit, he was now meditating a second even more wicked while he was putting the things back in the wardrobe; nothing less than to keep his mouth closed and have another go at the bottle when his wife returned. This pleasant prospect caused Don Gregorio, who had reached home in a very hostile disposition, to quiet down considerably. As he had resolved not to dine until the ladies returned, he went to await them in the drawing room, where he installed himself comfortably in a rocking chair, after taking out a newspaper from the drawer of a table. Before starting to read he inspected the street through the window. Not a soul

was passing and the rain kept falling in torrents, inundating streets and patios. The judge spread out the paper, the only one that found entrance into his house, "La Union Catolica,"* for Don Gregorio Lopez, a man addicted to old fashions, who wore half boots, was a fervent though bashful Catholic. For a long time he took no care to conceal his beliefs nor his practices, but since liberal breezes had begun to blow in the government, and he had seen with stupefaction that the Señor Bishop and the Jesuit fathers had gone out into exile, he thought the moment had arrived for relegating his faith to the bottom of his heart, and in regard to masses he attended only that at five o'clock in the morning, concealing himself behind a confessional box. Apparently, and in order not to go against the current, he applauded the great legislative reforms of the new men, but privately he did not cease to bewail the corruption of customs and the progress which liberalism and unbelief were making, not only in the educated classes and particularly in the young students, but also among the artisans, who now believed neither in God nor the devil.

Full of anxiety, he asked himself where society and the country would stop, when the so necessary bit of religion should cease to exist, above all if ideas kept on advancing, although this he did not consider possible, because Providence would surely end by getting

*The Catholic Union.

angry and putting things to rights.

"At the pace we are going," he often said to himself, "we'll have another French revolution here very soon."

For this reason he greatly admired in secret the daring of the paladines of "La Union Catolica" who did not hesitate to tell some plain truths to those upstart liberals, and even to the masons themselves, a sect which inspired him with mysterious terror. Don Gregorio was prudence personified, and in his long life as a public employé he had learned that to fight against the government is to kick against the pricks, and for this reason he confided his private thoughts to nobody. As everybody always saw him on friendly terms with politicians and other people not very Catholic, he passed generally for a man of progress and of liberal ideas. In order not to compromise this reputation, which was of advantage to him, the judge carried his diplomacy to the extreme of not appearing in the list of subscribers to the clerical daily, which the curate of La Soledad, a warm friend of his, sent to him every day by an acolyte. Don Gregorio buried himself in an article by Father Birot against the Protestants, who were trying to save souls with cheap Bibles and discordant songs.

The rumble of a carriage which stopped in front of the house aroused him from his interesting reading. He put away the newspaper and went to the window, arriving in

time to see the maid, who jumped from the carriage and ran into the porch of the house. The judge went out in search of the umbrella, giving it to the girl to cover her mistresses.

The ladies got out with some difficulty, because they did not wish to wet their skirts nor expose more than was strictly necessary, with a modesty so much the more worthy of approbation since nobody, except the judge or the coachman, could see them. The rain had kept them in the dressmaker's house, where they arrived late. In passing they had stopped to see various friends, in search of fashion plates. As it concerned a thing so important as the costume in which Aurelia, who had just completed her seventeenth year, would make her début in the approaching official ball which the government was giving on the anniversary of Independence, it was well to take much thought before making a decision. For this reason, and in spite of the fact that the ladies had passed all the middle of the day in going and coming, nothing was definitely settled, although now they had only to decide on one of the two models that they had set aside, one rose color and the other white. The judge, whom these matters of gew gaws and trinkets interested very little, remarked on the suitableness of dining. On hearing this, Aurelia, who gave promise of being a good little housewife, went to the dining-room to aid the maid servant in setting the table, and Doña Catalina

followed by her husband went to her room to give him his half-daily dram. Unmoved, Don Gregorio drank it without the least suspicion entering the mind of the extremely lean lady, occupied with the costume of her daughter. If this circumstance had not intervened, it was almost certain that the impenitent man, addicted to forbidden drams, would have taken a most bitter one, for Doña Catalina was malice incarnate, and very acute, which had contributed not a little toward keeping the judge within the limits of the most strict conjugal fidelity.

After taking away the soup plates the maid put the rest of the dinner upon the table; the classic dish of boiled meat and vegetables, a hash with peas, a piece of fried beef and a large dish of rice. Don Gregorio, who had a good appetite, ate heartily of everything, in contrast to his wife, victim of a poor one, who lived only on chayotes* and a glass or two of milk. Neither was the young girl a good eater, showing a preference for the picadillos,† especially for the one of green plantain. Like her father and mother, she was rather thin, so that scarcity of flesh seemed a rule in that family. After an interval of silence, the costume of Aurelia was talked of anew, and others that the ladies had seen at the dressmaker's were also discussed. Finally the conversation, always turning about the matters of

*A vegetable much used in tropical America.
†A dish of hashed meat and vegetables.

the ball, settled down on the grave subject of the turkey.‡ The prospect of not finding a partner for a dance is a thing which everywhere alarms the women, but among us it causes veritable terror. The strange part of it is that they should compare such a disagreeable time to a meal of turkey, a fowl so palatable. The young girl declared she would not go to the ball if she did not have her programme full beforehand.

"If it is to eat turkey," she said, "I prefer to stay right at home in bed."

"Go away with your foolishness," replied the judge. "These girls nowadays have some very rare ideas."

"You are right, Aurelia," interrupted Doña Catalina. "I don't want them to say here afterwards that you haven't moved from your chair all the evening. Moreover it's a sad thing to come out in society eating turkey."

"Well, what I maintain," said the judge again, "is that there is nothing more ridiculous than this absurb preoccupation which demands that the girls dance all night without stopping, even though they may be dead tired or a slipper may be pinching them. It also seems very improper to me to engage dances a month ahead."

"That is all very well," replied the lady, "but until the custom changes one has to do like the others. What I consider shameful is the conduct of the young men, who go to the balls

‡In Costa Rican dances, to eat turkey means to be a wall-flower.

only to eat and drink, and what is worse, to laugh at the poor girls who are dying of embarrassment, seated against the wall."

"That's true," said the judge. " In my time the young men were better bred."

Doña Catalina meditated a while, recalling without doubt the times which her husband had alluded to. Suddenly she raised her head and asked him:

"Have you spoken to Don Cirilo?"

Don Gregorio felt his wrath returning.

"I have already told you that that is impossible," he replied angrily.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the lady petulantly, "I don't see why it is. Don Cirilo is indebted to you for some great favors. What harm is it to ask him one that won't cost him anything? My father was right when he said you never would be any good." The judge felt himself grow pale with wrath and was on the point of letting off a broadside at his wife, and even at his defunct father-in-law, whose memory was particularly distasteful to him. The presence of the young girl, and perhaps also the bitter remembrance that he had of those conjugal encounters, in which he was always the under dog, restrained him. Aurelia, respectful, and ignorant of the cause of the trouble, did not dare to interfere between her angry parents. After a painful silence, the judge continued more calmly:

"If it concerned only Don Cirilo, who is my

friend, I would not say no, but you know already that—"

"Very well," interrupted Doña Catalina with a warning nod toward Aurelia. The judge became silent. Neither of the two wanted the girl to learn about the matter which had not ceased to be a delicate one, as will be seen. Doña Catalina, of a very humble origin, but who had always had great aspirations, hoped that Aurelia would reach heights which she herself, daughter of José Cordoba, master carpenter of the Puebla,* had not been able to attain, even though she had climbed up some rounds of the social ladder by means of her marriage with the lawyer Don Gregorio Lopez. However, it was not hidden from the ambitious lady that now she could climb no higher, as her husband was not rich, talented, nor of distinguished family. In her daughter's case she imagined that the thing would be much easier, because Aurelia, placed in better conditions, would not meet with the same obstacles that had closed the way for her; and, as the girl was pretty and had good manners, she hoped that she would make a good marriage. With this end in view the lady had begun to prepare the ground with much patience and skill. One of the means that she had regarded as most efficacious to gain her point, was putting the young lady in the college of Our Lady of Zion,† so that, together with good instruction

*A district in San José.
†A school for young ladies in the convent of that name.

and distinguished manners, she might be making friendships advantageous for the future, although the truth was that to date the results were not in proportion to the sacrifices which Doña Catalina had made to keep her daughter in this aristocratic house for four years.

The little friends who had been so affectionate in the convent were now each time more reserved with Aurelia. Social distinctions little by little began to raise their barriers between the daughter of the judge and her companions, better born or richer. How many friendships die in the same way on the thresholds of scholastic halls! Nevertheless the persevering mamma did not lose heart in her undertaking, and in spite of her intolerant temper, took pains to hide the mortification which the slights offered to her daughter caused her. She thought, and with reason, that skill was of more account than force. This same tenacity in her scheme had been the cause of her dispute with Don Gregorio. Very much taken up with the first appearance of her daughter in an official ball, she wanted Aurelia to figure among the very first, dancing with the flower and the cream of the young men..

The matter of the first dance to which our women attach so much importance, appeared to Doña Catalina as the most difficult of all the problems that she had to solve on this occasion. She considered it indispensable that the young lady should dance with some one of much pres-

tige, so that her initiation into social life might be very brilliant and notable. With this end in view she had reviewed lists of youths who might do for the event, and, after profound meditation, she saw clearly that in the whole city of San José there was but one gentleman in whose person all the necessary requirements were united. He was the oldest son of Don Cirilo Vargas, magistrate of the Court of Casacion.

Ricardo Vargas was without doubt one of the most distinguished young men of the capital. By birth he belonged to one of the first families of the country; in intellect and learning, to the aristocracy of talent. Still very young, scarcely twenty-six years old, he was already considered one of the best advocates of the Costa Rican bar. A good figure, together with elegant and pleasing manners, served as a setting for these gifts.

It was not strange, then, that more than one lovely Josefina* should go to her window when he passed, or should follow him with lingering glances in the Central Park or in the Avenue of the Dames.

The person being found, the most delicate point of the problem still remained to be solved. How could she arrange it so that Ricardo Vargas, an aristocrat over whom the most haughty señoritas were jealous, should have the first dance with Aurelia Lopez, a young lady who was poor and not too well connected.

*The women of San José are called Josefinas in Costa Rica.

After much hesitating, Doña Catalina finally remembered that years ago, at the time when General Guardia was governing the country, her husband had done a very great favor for Don Cirilo Vargas. He, becoming involved in a conspiracy, found himself a prisoner and on the eve of going out into exile, when his wife, on the advice of a friend, begged Don Gregorio Lopez, at that time employed as private secretary to the president, to intercede in favor of her husband. Don Gregorio was supposed to have some influence over the mind of the dictator. Whether he had it or not, the result of his intervention was very efficacious, because Don Cirilo not only recovered his freedom but came out of prison to occupy a public office of importance.

Since this debt of gratitude had been contracted by the magistrate, Doña Catalina thought that the moment had arrived for collecting it; and taking advantage one night of the intimacy of the conjugal couch, she explained her plans to the judge.

He disapproved of them roundly, saying that the matter was a delicate one and that she must be aware of the fact; that although he did not doubt the good will of Don Cirilo, it was necessary to reckon also with the consent of the young lawyer.

The judge brought forth many other reasons to dissuade his wife from carrying out her project; but Doña Catalina, always accustomed

to having her own way, heard her husband as one who hears it rain, resolving to wait for a more propitious time. But from that night not a day passed that disagreeable words and disputes did not arise. Doña Catalina persisted obstinately in the affirmative and Don Gregorio in the negative. And thus it was that the ball of the 15th of September was becoming an apple of discord in that family.

The harassed judge could find no way to escape from the embarrassment which the obstinacy of his wife caused him.

Many times he was on the point of making a clean breast of it to the magistrate, but when the critical moment arrived, the thing he was going to say stuck in his throat. Each time the situation grew worse, for as the date of the ball drew nearer the importunity and bad humor of Doña Catalina increased. Aurelia, who usually was very easy going, now had no rest for thinking of the turkey, and could not understand for what reason her mamma had forbidden her to engage the first dance. She herself would have liked well to dance it with Pedro Cervantes, a very attractive young law student, who looked at her a good deal in the park and often stopped at her street corner. Her mamma, however, had taken a great dislike to the youth and did not waste any opportunity to ridicule him, saying that he was a "concho,"* and calling him 'Ñor† Pedro. On

*A country bumpkin.
†A contraction of señor used by the country people of Costa Rica.

the other hand Don Gregorio undertook his defence, putting him up in the clouds as a well-behaved and industrious student. He said that the poor fellow was not to blame for being the son of a countryman, and moreover that there was not the least disgrace in it, on the contrary his merit was all the greater because he owed everything to his own efforts. "Pedro will very soon be a lawyer," he was accustomed to say, "and in Costa Rica the lawyers are good for everything, even to conduct a mass. It is true that the profession has not made me rich, but it has always given me enough to eat. Remember what I say; that boy will some day be a cabinet minister like Don Fulano and Don Perencejo,"‡ and he mentioned some well-known names.

Nevertheless the weighty arguments of Don Gregorio did not convince the lady who, like the skilful adversary she was, was very handy with trifling ones.

One day the judge, exasperated by the persistency of his wife that he should speak to Don Cirilo, exclaimed aggressively: "Why don't you go to Doña Inez and tell her what you want?" Doña Inez was the wife of the magistrate.

"*I* talk to that stupid bundle of conceit who thinks herself the daughter of the Eternal Father," replied the lady angrily. "I see that you are more stupid every day." And this was the truth, not in regard to the growing stupid-

‡Indefinite names used as one uses in English "such a one and so and so."

ity of the judge, but the arrogance of Don Cirilo's wife. Without literally believing that she was directly sprung from the Creator of the universe, Doña Inez had the highest opinion of her lineage and aristocratic position, like a good and legitimate daughter of the most noble and loyal city of Cartago.* Outside of her relatives and some other families, Carthaginians of course, there did not exist for her other than half breeds and country yokels. Don Gregorio wished that his wife would commend herself to some good saint.

The indomitable tenacity of the lady finally prevailed over the scruples of her husband. On the afternoon of the 14th of September, as he came out of the Palace of Justice in company with the magistrate, he told him, with much halting and many preambles, all about it. Don Cirilo, somewhat surprised, nevertheless took kindly to the petition of his friend, promising to talk to his son immediately, and assuring him that if Ricardo had not already engaged himself he should dance with Aurelia.

"In case he has done so, I shall send you word before seven o'clock," added the magistrate. Don Gregorio returned to his house so pleased at having finally fulfilled his contract that he was not averse to confessing that his wife had done right in persisting in her project. That same night, not having received any word from Don Cirilo, when the family was gathered together for the evening choco-

*The former capital of Costa Rica.

late, and the bells of La Soledad were tolling "Las Animas,"* the judge announced to his surprised daughter that Ricardo Vargas would dance the first number with her at the ball of the next evening.

CHURCH OF LA SOLEDAD

As the morning of the 15th dawned, the reveilles and cannon shots, which announced the glorious anniversary of Independence, began to interrupt the profound slumber of Don Gregorio Lopez, who was sleeping quietly for the first time since the conjugal disturbances began. Doña Catalina, contrary to her custom, awoke in a good humor, since the joy which

*The souls.

walked* within her was great. Only Aurelia continued sleeping until seven, because she had lain awake a good part of the night, thinking always of the terrible turkey. The mother and daughter passed all of that day in great preparations for the night. Don Gregorio walked to the street of La Sabana with a friend to see the troops file past as they returned from the review. Only one thing about the ball interested him,—the supper. The judge numbered each of these great festivities by as many formidable attacks of indigestion, but the truffled wild turkeys and other dainties displayed last year by the jovial Victor Aubert of Marseilles, whose epicurean traditions the fastidious Italian, Benedictis, has undertaken to perpetuate, had more weight with him than the fear of the consequences of his intemperance. Early in the evening commenced the thousand tasks of dressing. The whole house was in confusion, the wardrobes open, clothing scattered about on the furniture, and doors opened and closed without ceasing.

"May God give me patience!" exclaimed Doña Catalina as she went from one room to another with a pin cushion and a package of hairpins. "I'm going crazy right now. I don't find anything I want in all this disorder."

The lady multiplied herself, gave orders to the maid, advice to Aurelia, fetched with her own hands what was wanted, and gave directions to an accommodating and skilful neigh-

**La alegria que le andaba por dentro.*

bor, who had taken charge of combing the young lady's hair. Spread out on the bed, vaporous and fresh looking, was the costume, the object of so much anxiety and solicitude. Aurelia had selected the white dress, against the opinion of her mamma who would have preferred the rose colored. The hair dressing was drawing to a close, and the neighbor seemed very satisfied with her work, laboriously executed by means of the comb, padding and hairpins. A diamond pin of bad taste finished the deforming of a little head that lacked neither refinement nor grace. Then came the turn of the white of pearls with which the neighbor and the mamma rubbed the breast and arms of the girl. She herself applied cream of cucumber to her face, and then a good coating of rice powder with a puff.

Smeared in this manner, with her eyelids stiff and her eyelashes white, the poor little girl felt ashamed, but all of those present declared that she was charming. The maid and Ramona, who had left the kitchen expressly to admire their young mistress, were the most enthusiastic.

The tranquil and satisfied mamma left the daughter in the hands of the neighbor and the maid, and went to adorn herself also, a task which did not require so great care as the other. Don Gregorio, ready some time ago, clad in an antediluvian dress suit that Rodriguez had made for him in the time of Gen-

eral Guardia, was walking back and forth in the corridor that encircled the patio.

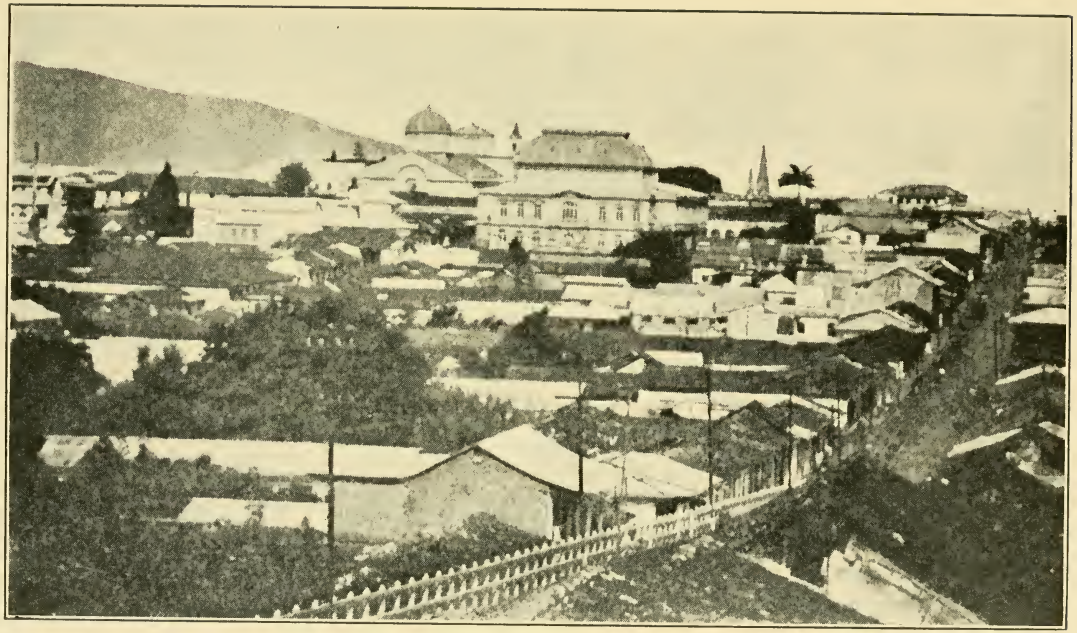
According to tradition, it rained in pitchersful, and already the judge was beginning to ask himself anxiously if the coach, which he had ordered the night before, would come, when they called him in to see the young lady. To Don Gregorio she seemed too white and too scantily clad, but he pretended that he was delighted. A little while afterwards Doña Catalina entered, modestly attired as was becoming in a person of her years whom nobody was going to notice. Soon Doña Paula, a maiden sister of the judge, appeared, sopping wet, for she had not feared to come down in the deluge from the top of the Cuesta de Moras,* to have the satisfaction of putting on her niece a necklace which she had worn to balls when she was young and some earrings which had been left her by her mother. With these additions the poor girl finally looked like a doll adorned by infantile hands. The coach arrived a little late. Aided by Don Gregorio, who covered them with an umbrella, the ladies stepped into it, leaving a strong scent of Japanese corelopsis in their wake.

They had barely driven away when another coach, which came at a gallop, stopped in front of the house. Don Cirilo Vargas got out of it hurriedly. On learning however that those whom he sought were not there, he could not keep back an oath, and ordered the coachman

*Blackberry Hill, an elevation in the City of San José.

to go with all speed to the National Palace. As the horses gave a violent pull a tug broke and it had to be mended as best it could. Without doubt it was written that Doña Catalina was not to have things as she had planned. A series of ordinary circumstances, although impossible to foresee, had combined to upset the plans so nicely laid by the astute lady. Thus Fate is accustomed to play with the most foreseeing mortals.

What had taken place was as follows: After the painful confidence which the judge had made to him on the afternoon of the 14th Don Cirilo Vargas learned from his daughter Mercedes when he reached home that Ricardo had started for Cartago en route for Orosi, where he had been called by an important business matter, in which one of his clients was interested, but that he ought certainly to return on the afternoon of the 15th. The magistrate then inquired what dances he had engaged for the ball, and had the satisfaction of learning that he had not promised the first one, because like a good ladies' man he did not like to show a preference for any of his flames on such occasions. Sure of being able to please his friend, Don Cirilo did not think more about the matter nor did he send word to the judge's house. And here was where the skein began to get tangled, because Ricardo Vargas, anxious to finish at once the business which had taken him to Orosi, had to prolong his stay



SAN JOSÉ FROM THE "CUESTA DE MORAS"

more than he had intended, and much as he urged his horse he could not reach Cartago in time for the last train in the afternoon. What could he do in this dilemma? In fact, there were only two courses open to him: to continue on horseback or to spend the night in Cartago. Both were extremely disagreeable, because if giving up the ball was hard, neither was the prospect of two hours on a sorry beast in the rain very alluring. The lawyer chose the latter course after a moment of indecision. Used up as he was by his journey from Orosi to Cartago, he decided to dine and rest a while in that city no matter if he arrived in San José a little late, since he had no engagements for the first part of the ball. When he had thus solved the difficulty he went in search of a friend to dine with him at the inn; which they did at their ease.

At the very moment that he was mounting his horse it occurred to him that it would be well to let them know at home what had happened; his friend therefore promised to send a telegram. It was only at the last minute, remembering the promise he had made to Don Gregorio, that the magistrate, uneasy on account of the absence of his son, inquired as to his whereabouts, and Doña Inez showed him the telegram which she had received from Cartago.

Don Cirilo, upset by this unforeseen mishap, sent out hurriedly for a coach and went on the

gallop to the house of his friend, to tell him what had happened and to make his excuses.

When Aurelia entered the great courtyard of the National Palace, converted for the occasion at the cost of a deal of money into an immense ball room, she felt very much disturbed. Hundreds of electric lamps radiated their clear light upon the multitude of invited ones, making visible with implacable discourtesy the artifices and the rouge of the ladies. Upon the canvas, sprinkled with paper spangles, which covered the floor, the black costumes of the men who were moving eagerly about with programmes and pencils in hand, engaging a waltz or a mazurka, were seen in bold relief.

In the first row of chairs was the swarm of marriageable young ladies dressed in light colors among which white predominated, the fortunate ones whispering and laughing behind their fluttering fans, the presumptive victims of the turkey pale with anxiety. Ah, how cruel are those men who go to balls and do not dance! If they knew the anguish of the unhappy maidens who see themselves condemned to stay in their seats before the ironical glances of friends and unknown persons, they would not hesitate to run instantly to put an end to such horrible torment. Poor little Aurelia trembled to think that she had only four names written on her programme. At that moment she really felt very sorry that she had not remained firm in her first resolu-

tion of not coming to the ball, at least if she were not well protected against a possible disappointment.

"Why did I come, Dios mio! Why did I come!" she murmured in anguish, while a cold perspiration ran along her back at the idea that she was observed, that everyone knew that she was going to eat turkey. Her ears buzzed.

What most augmented her confusion were the spectators in the galleries of the first floor. There, in ambush, were the worst gossipers of San José and the most dangerous viperine tongues. What would they not say! Each time that a young man drew near, desirous of putting his name on the programme of one of her neighbors, it seemed like an offense to her, poor disdained one. So excited were her nerves that the martial strains of the national hymn, which started up suddenly, announcing the arrival of the President, made her jump. A few minutes afterwards the opening march commenced.

And Ricardo Vargas did not appear! Doña Catalina, seated behind her daughter, was in despair, turning about and scrutinizing the corners of the enormous salon, while Don Gregorio, by her orders, minutely searched the whole Palace. Poor Aurelia's color came and went, and she tried to hide behind her fan when any of her former companions of Our Lady of Zion passed in front, looking, with

glances half impertinent and half pitying, at her seated there in her chair.

The orchestra struck up the music for the quadrille of honor and the sets were already beginning to be formed, when Don Cirilo arrived quite out of breath, waving the telegram from Ricardo. The wife of the judge felt as though the building were falling upon her. Then her daughter not only would not dance with the most elegant gentleman of San José but was to commence eating turkey at the very first dance! Dios Santo! What was she to do!

In that moment of supreme anguish there presented itself to the unhappy ladies, like a stray plank to a shipwrecked seaman, salvation in the form of a young man of pleasant and agreeable aspect. It was Pedro Cervantes, who with much bashfulness came to beg the honor of dancing with the Señorita Aurelia. The young girl, mad with joy, begged the permission of her mamma with a glance, and she, bowing her head to the power of destiny, assented with resignation.

"What do you think of the ball, Doña Catalina?" one of her lady acquaintances asked her a little while afterwards.

"Frankly, it doesn't seem to me much of an affair," answered the one who was questioned. After a pause she added, "These Palace balls nowadays aren't what they used to be. You remember those that Don Tomas Guardia used to give. Those indeed were magnificent. I

shan't forget one when they danced all over the Presidential Palace with five orchestras playing different pieces; and I still seem to see the general in his uniform all covered with gold braid, paying court to the ladies and serving them in person. Believe me, there won't be another president like Don Tomas."

"And where do you place that ball?" exclaimed another lady joining in the conversation, "which a Peruvian minister gave in which they had a fountain of Florida water?"

"That was also very fine," replied Doña Catalina. "Say what you please, in those times one used to see very fine affairs, and society was not so mixed up as it is now. I'm almost ashamed to say it, but now they don't respect anybody or anything, and the worst scandals are in the best families. They treat us old people like trash. You will see that all this evening there won't be anybody who'll offer to escort us even for a glass of water. For that reason I'm better pleased to have my daughter dance with modest and honorable young men, like Pedro Cervantes, so that she mayn't be in danger of hearing the things those abandoned ones, who know only how to gamble, drink and seduce women, are in the habit of saying to young ladies. I am frank, I prefer that my daughter work dressing images for the churches, rather than see her married to some vagabond of good family, one of those who pass their lives in the club and in the Grand Café."

Doña Catalina kept on quite a while in this key, smarting as she was from the deep wound to her self-esteem which the slight of Ricardo Vargas had caused her, because she did not in the least believe that it was all the result of an accident.

When the dance ended, Aurelia and Pedro returned to the place where they had left the offended lady. The face of the law student shone with great joy, since what was happening seemed like a dream to him. The night before the ball he did not know that he would have the good fortune to see his lady-love at all, even at a distance and dancing with another; for in spite of the freedom with which the invitations to the Palace ball were given out, he had not yet been able to obtain his, which he finally got by means of a friendly fellow-student.

And now he was able not only to see her, admire her close at hand, but also take her in his arms, dance with her, breath the perfume of her chestnut hair—a veritable dream!

With the aid of the law student's friends, Aurelia's empty dance-card was soon covered with names. In the face of such repeated and opportune services, the mamma felt that her prejudice against the young man was beginning to disappear, to such an extent that when the young lady, stammering and timid, said that Pedro begged permission to take supper with her, she granted it without great difficulty.

Don Gregorio could not get over the surprise which the sight of his daughter dancing with Pedro Cervantes, among the multitude of couples that filled the salon, caused him. In spite of all the suppositions that occurred to him, he could not succeed in finding a plausible explanation for that strange happening, considering the antipathy with which the law student inspired Doña Catalina. What could it be? An act of insurrection on the part of Aurelia! No. That was not possible, because a girl so submissive, of such a sweet disposition, was incapable of making such a scandal. But then, what was it that was going on? And the judge, very much perplexed, went to his wife to have her give him the key to the enigma.

In a few words she informed him of what had happened. "Here is the telegram that that old pastry cook, Don Cirilo, has brought me," she added giving him the piece of blue paper. Don Gregorio seemed somewhat cut up over the calamity, but he thought it his duty to declare that he was convinced of the loyalty and good faith of the Vargas family.

"I don't want you to talk to me any more of those 'sinverguenzas,' "* exclaimed the lady, recalling in that moment of wrath the vocabulary of her father, the master carpenter.

In the meanwhile Aurelia was feeling perfectly happy, as the result of the very same

*Literally "without shame." In Spanish it is a very hard name to apply to a person.

circumstances which were making Doña Catalina froth at the mouth. A true copy of her father, she had managed to be untainted by the social aspirations of the lady, her mother. For this reason the absence of Ricardo Vargas annoyed her only at the moment when she was in danger of eating turkey, the trend of her thoughts changing from the instant when Pedro Cervantes had arrived, like a rescuing paladin, to save her from that nightmare. Everything that before seemed adverse and threatening now seemed favorable and smiling. Even the busybodies in the galleries, occupied in flaying every living being, appeared to her as good and charitable ladies.

After the first dance, she had two more with Pedro, who was also very bashful, and said nothing to her. But after supper, when the two were seated together in the Hall of Congress, under the portrait of Don José Rafael de Gallegos, and the young man was warmed by the champagne and the feminine aromas which floated in the atmosphere, he made bold to reveal to her what she already knew very well, that he loved her. The girl grew rosy red in spite of the rice powder and the white of pearls; and after making an honorable resistance to the sweet importunity of the enamoured student, she murmured her assent in a very low tone, lowering her eyes and apparently being very tranquil, but in her breast her little heart was fluttering like a wild bird that has just been caged.

. . . . . .

A year and a half afterwards Don Gregorio Lopez and Doña Catalina sent out invitations to the coming marriage of their daughter Aurelia to the lawyer Don Pedro Cervantes.

UN HÉROE

(A HERO.)

WE all knew, by the suggestive nickname of Cususa,* a poor shoemaker, whose small blue eyes were hidden under thick gray eyebrows, which, when he had shaved himself, produced the comical impression that his mustaches had ascended to his forehead; but, as he was not accustomed to coming in contact often with the barber, he was usually seen with his face covered with stiff hair that gave him an aspect of ferocity, tempered by the intense sweetness of his glance. The distinguishing characteristic of the shoemaker was his merriness, a wild irresistibly catching merriness. If one, in passing some tavern heard shouts, laughter, music, and the sound of dancing, he did not need to inquire the cause. Only Cususa was capable of converting the inveterate sadness of the guaro drinkers into joy. He detested quarrels and was always ready to interfere in order to stop them, silencing by the force of good-humor the endless disputes between the drunkards. But if the dissensions continued and grew into a fight, the festive shoemaker changed his arguments and with a couple of well-directed blows

*Brandy.

re-established order, for he was a powerful man, and brave to rashness.

They used to tell, among many other things, of an affair with a much feared desperado who had just been released from the prison of San Lucas. Cususa was dancing in a wine-shop to the music of a guitar, when the rascal, irritated doubtless by the merry uproar which the good fellow was making, pulled out a dagger and cut the strings of the instrument. There was a spark in the eyes of the shoemaker. With one leap he was at the side of the aggressor, and gripping him by the wrist with terrible force, be bent it back until he made him let go of the dagger. Then, looking him straight in the eyes with an expression of great disdain, he spit in his face, crying repeatedly: "Assassin! Coward!" The desperado abandoned the field, with many threats, but he was never seen again in the places which Cususa frequented.

The shoemaker's drunkenness was not continuous, as one might suppose. Two or three weeks used to pass without his taking a single glass, while he worked industriously in his shop, for he had plenty of customers and aside from his fondness for the bottle was a model workman. But once the thirst for brandy and the longing for dancing had come upon him, good-bye to awls and soles, for there was no one who could keep him in the house.

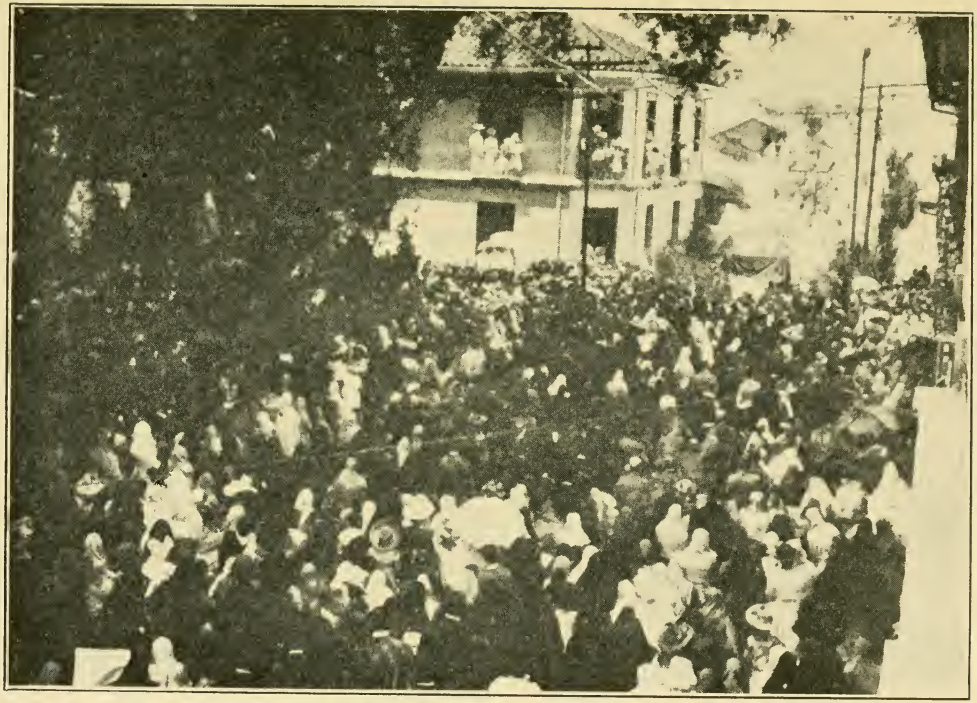
The difficulty was even greater when the

civic festivals came, with their three days of bull fights and masquerading. Scarcely did he hear the first fire-cracker, when he would station himself in the street and would not return until he came home on a stretcher after the inevitable upset from the horns of some bull from Guanacaste. Other occasions for im-

A MILITARY REVIEW

bibing were the military ceremonies. Processions, reviews, funerals, every act in which troops preceded by a band figured produced an irresistible itching for celebrating. He used to pass all Holy Week doing penance in the Vineyards of the Lord.

The libations commenced with Palm Sunday, very early in the morning, so that he could be present at the complicated ceremonies of the



A RELIGIOUS PROCESSION

going out of the flag. Then he used to follow the procession at the side of the music, marking time, indifferent to everything but the drums, cornets and words of command. In his passion for military pomp he noticed nothing else, neither the image ridiculously bedecked, riding on a mule, nor the improvised avenues of bamboos which adorned the streets with their green feather-like plumes, nor even the groups of handsome country girls in their Sunday attire carrying blessed palm branches in their hands.

When the procession was over and the Lord of Triumph, seated in an arm-chair and wearing a violet colored hat, was reposing in an improvised garden of "uruca" branches, Cususa used to return behind the soldiers, leaping to the tune of a lively two-step, until he left them at the barracks. The carousal continued afterwards in the wine-shop, in company with numerous parasites who took advantage of his generous nature, with sonorous shouts of "Viva Costa Rica!" and much talk about the campaign against the filibusters. While his mother lived, a little old woman, blind from cataracts, whom he cared for with great solicitude, the intemperance of the shoemaker was confined within certain limits; but when he found himself alone in the world, for relations he had none, the days of rest grew more frequent.

Often he was to be seen sprawled out in

the taverns, or sleeping in the street in the beneficent shade of some tree. Soon the poor man became the object of ridicule and gibes from unkind persons, and especially from the boys who at the time were attending school.

With the thoughtless cruelty of childhood, we used to take delight in tormenting poor Cususa, when on account of too much liquor he was unable to defend himself as he used to do in the good times when he dealt those famous blows which inspired respect and consideration.

I remember how, on coming out of the class room one afternoon, a few of us little rascals came upon the shoemaker lying, helpless, close to an adobe wall. To see him and to feel ourselves thrill with joy was all one. Now we had before us the prospect of a good bit of diversion. After a consultation, in which we discussed the means of torment which were to be adopted for that day, the idea of painting him predominated. A box of blacking appeared, from nobody knew where, and the chief of the party took charge of the work. Soon Cususa was transformed into a guy, and at each new stroke of the artist's fancy we almost burst ourselves with laughing.

A vigorous and manly voice behind us made us turn with frightened faces, to find ourselves face to face with Captain Ramírez, an elderly retired officer, a veteran of the National War.*

*The war against the filibuster Walker. Costa Rica took the most prominent part in this war, and it is there regarded as a kind of Heroic Age. Walker was defeated by the Costa Ricans.

VETERANS OF THE WAR WITH WALKER

With gentle severity he reprimanded us for what we had just done, and to exhort us not to torment again the unfortunate man he told us the history, which I am going to transcribe faithfully.

. . . . . .

When Don Juanito Mora declared war against the filibuster Walker, who had taken possession of Nicaragua, Joaquin Garcia, or Cususa as they call him now, was only eighteen years old, and, being the only son of a widowed mother, was exempt from going to the war. Nevertheless the boy was set on going with his companions, and as he could not succeed in getting into the ranks, he evaded the vigilance of his mother one night, and walking without rest went to join the army on the march for the Northern frontier. I found him one morning, half dead from hunger and fatigue, and recognizing him, for we were neighbors, I succeeded in getting him into the column of the vanguard of which I formed a part.

A few days afterward we surprised the enemy in Santa Rosa, where our flag received its baptism of glory. In vain the Yankees tried to withstand the thrust of our bayonets; they could not resist us, and on that day we had the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing the bully, Schlessinger, who commanded them, fleeing like a poltroon. The victory, it is true, cost us dear. We lost there many brave men,

and the wounded covered the ground. Among those most dangerously wounded was found poor Joaquin, with his chest pierced by a rifle ball.

At this point the Captain interrupted his narrative, and, opening the shoemaker's shirt, he showed us a deep scar in the region of the right lung. After a pause he proceeded:

This had taken place on the 30th day of March, 1856. On the 11th of April following I also fell wounded, in the streets of Rivas. Here in his turn Walker surprised us, but did not succeed in conquering us. He had rather to retire, abandoning his wounded. I returned to Liberia in a terrible condition. There I found Joaquin also in the military hospital. By a rare chance we both escaped the epidemic of cholera, which broke out in the army, so weakened by the hot climate of Nicaragua and the terrible bloodshed of the battle of Rivas. We convalesced together in Puntarenas, where I had some relatives who took care of us as well as one could wish. Some months afterward, when there was talk of a new invasion of Nicaragua, we both requested to be taken back into the army in the field. The only thing we could gain was permission to be enrolled in the garrison of Puntarenas. On the second of November, our army which had been mobilized in Liberia, again set out on the march for the frontier under the command of General Cañas. Joaquin and I were incon-

solable, on account of our inability to go with it, when an unhoped for opportunity of returning to the campaign presented itself to us. The brigantine "Eleventh of April," so named in memory of the heroic fight of Rivas, was about to sail from the port, armed for war, to co-operate in the hostilities, and put an end to the depredations of the filibuster bark Granada. At the last hour there were some losses in the crew so that we succeeded in enlisting on her. We set sail on the eleventh of November, carrying an abundance of provisions, arms, ammunition and money for the army. The brigantine had for defence four brass cannon. Her captain was Don Antonio Vallerriestra, a young officer of the Peruvian navy, who had placed his sword at the service of our cause. From the time we set sail the sea was very tempestuous and the winds were contrary, so much so that we spent eleven days in navigating the short distance between Puntarenas and San Juan del Sur. Almost all of us were afloat for the first time, and we suffered greatly from seasickness; but in spite of this, and the battering of the storms which shook the vessel to her keel, we did not allow ourselves to be discouraged a single instant, for we had faith in our destiny and truly believed ourselves invincible. Scarcely did that stormy sea give us a short respite, when good-humor again appeared aboard the brigantine, and officers and soldiers were rivals in warlike enthusiasm.

Between rain squalls we managed to amuse ourselves, telling stories, playing cards, or chaffing each other. Some also used to sing the sad and monotonous songs of our country, which gave us a homesick longing for its green coffee plantations and swift running rivers. Stirred by the slowness of the rhythm we would silently call up visions of the distant fatherland; but each time that this happened a shrill and familiar cry would be heard, the cry of our mountains which no Costa Rican can hear without emotion, and Joaquin would break out into a rollicking clog-dance, accompanied by ridiculous and characteristic exclamations which instantly dispelled the melancholy of our thoughts.

We all adored him for his goodness of character and his constant jovialness. The gallantry of his conduct at Santa Rosa and the almost mortal wound he had received there, were equally potent means of gaining the sympathy and affection of all. At other times, seated in a circle on deck, we talked of the war, and my comrades were never weary of making me repeat the story of the battles of Santa Rosa and Rivas, and particularly the details of the glorious death of Juan Santa Maria, the drummer boy of Alajuela, who had formerly been a sacristan.* With the greatest attention they listened to my words, full of ad-

*He was the hero of the battle of Santa Rosa, setting fire, at the cost of his own life, to the ranch house in which Walker's men had taken their stand. There is a bronze statue of him in the town of Alajuela.

miration for the lad marching serenely to certain death. I told them how he had returned the first time safe and sound to our ranks, when in a storm of bullets he had set fire to the ranch house which served the enemy as a fort; the sublime audacity of the hero trying again the hazardous undertaking, as the enemy had succeeded in putting out the fire; how he returned a second time unscathed to the walls of the house and again sprinkled them with petroleum and applied the torch which he carried in his right hand; the despairing cry which broke from our lips on seeing his avenging arm fall helpless, broken by the well-aimed bullet of a Yankee; then the indescribable enthusiasm, the great pride, which the sight aroused in us of the drummer boy picking up the torch again, brandishing it with his unhurt arm, until the destroying flames arose again; finally the hero's fall riddled with bullets at the foot of the fire kindled by his valiant hand. "That was a man! Viva Costa Rica!" Joaquin invariably exclaimed, as the narrative was finished; and all, stirred by the sincerity of his enthusiasm would join in the shout "Viva Costa Rica!" we would answer, and the noise of our voices was lost in the roaring of the waves.

The "Eleventh of April," buffeted by the storms, began to leak considerably and we had to take to the pumps. In this condition we arrived in front of the bay of San Juan del

Sur, on the afternoon of November 22nd. Captain Vallerriestra inspected the coast carefully with a telescope, then we saw him conferring with the military commanders. When the council was over he ordered the bow turned toward the shore.

Not much time passed before we sighted a sail, which came out from the port and steered toward us. The captain, who was continuing his inspection, suddenly said a few words to Major Maheigt at his side, and immediately gave the order to clear for action. A gust of enthusiasm swept over the vessel. At last we were going to meet the enemy. At about six o'clock we hoisted our flag. The sight of the fluttering tricolored stripes inflamed our hearts; we saluted it with delirious enthusiasm.

The enemy's vessel was now quite close and on her quarter deck we could see the blue and white ensign of the old Central American Federation, capped by the red star of the usurper. A few minutes afterward the air was rent by a thunderous report, and we heard the enemy's first broadside pass over our head. Then the combat started with unspeakable fury, the Yankees determined to avenge the drubbing our arms had given them at Santa Rosa and Rivas. Our men, most of whom were smelling powder for the first time, fought with unsurpassed courage, even though the ordinary hazards of a sea fight were increased for us

by the inexperience of our gunners and the great danger we were in from the leaks of the "Eleventh of April," through which water was pouring in torrents; and as if this were not enough, a fire broke out in the bow one hour after the beginning of the fight. But what could water, fire and the enemy's bullets do against the fever of patriotism which had turned us mad? Dauntlessly the twenty-four year old captain directed the manœuvres with the calmness of a sea-wolf grown gray in warfare. With quiet daring he went to the places of greatest danger, directing, amid the flying missiles, the putting out of the fire, the management of the pumps and the aiming of cannons. He seemed to be everywhere at once, aided by Major Maheigt, who was valor personified; and all, animated by such sublime examples, seeing that even the chaplain had taken a gun in hand, fought like wild beasts.

Night came on and still the terrible fight continued, lighted up by the flames that were devouring our vessel. Joaquin, whose smiling intrepidity filled us with admiration, said to me with a laugh between two shots:

"My, lieutenant, what a good supper is being prepared for the sharks! They won't have teeth enough to eat so much fresh meat, still as there will be plenty of salt to season it they won't be much bothered."

This allusion to the almost inevitable fate that was awaiting us, made in those moments

of mortal peril and with such light-heartedness, paints admirably the character of the boy, a mixture of bravery and jovialness.

In spite of the very bad conditions under which we fought, our fire was causing many losses among the enemy. His fire was growing gradually weaker and victory was beginning to shine in our eyes with magic splendor, when about ten o'clock at night a great light illuminated everything around, accompanied by a tremendous explosion. Without knowing what was happening to me, I was hurled through the air for a long distance until I fell into the sea. The coolness of the water cleared my head. I understood that the "Eleventh of April" had blown up. After a little, I managed to lay hold of a piece of wood which came floating by, for a sharp pain in one leg made it hard for me to swim. From the riven hull of our beloved brigantine flames still burst forth, casting a red light upon the tossing waves, which allowed one to see intermittently the gloomy scene of the shipwreck. Floating about at random a multitude of boards, boxes and casks could be seen, which the survivors of the catastrophe seized hold of with desperation.

The pain in my leg, caused by a wound which I received at the very moment of the explosion, became unbearable. I felt that I was losing consciousness and all would soon be over with me. From the vessel in her death agony,

A HUMBLE FUNERAL

a last flame burst forth, and the "Eleventh of April" plunged to the bottom with an awe-inspiring roar. There was a death-like silence, and darkness reigned upon the sea. Then, as though it were the death-rattle of the expiring vessel, a wild shout rang out in the darkness: "Viva Costa Rica! Death to Walker!" It was the voice of Joaquin, spitting a last insult in the face of the usurper. I fainted and let go of the piece of wood which sustained me.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself aboard the Granada. A comrade who was beside me, also wounded, told me that Joaquin had saved my life, holding me up in the water until one of the enemy's boats picked me up. He told me that the heroic boy, after saving two more shipwrecked men, had refused to surrender, preferring to run the risk of almost certain death to the humiliation of confessing himself a prisoner of the Yankees. I learned also that Captain Vallerriestra, covered with dreadful burns, was aboard the Granada, and that his youth and his heroic conduct had aroused the admiration of the enemy's officers. With us also were the brave Maheigt and the priest Godoy, so badly wounded that he died a few hours afterwards.

Of the hundred and ten men who formed the crew of the brigantine, forty were saved, besides Joaquin, who managed to get to the shore with the aid of a barrel. He was found almost dead on the beach by some good people,

who undertook to bring him back to life with vigorous rubbings and doses of brandy which they had to make him take almost by force, for up to that time he had been temperate in the extreme. After that however he was less so, and that and nothing else was the beginning of his intemperance.

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The veteran became silent, and his eyes, turned on Cususa, who continued to sleep profoundly, were full of kindness and compassion. Straightway he asked for water in a neighboring house, and taking out his handkerchief, washed the drunkard's face carefully. When it was somewhat cleaner, he shook him vigorously, shouting in his ear: "Joaquin! Joaquin!" On hearing the voice of his old-time superior the drunkard gave a start and heavily opening his eyes murmured, with thickened tongue: "Present, my captain." With a great effort the veteran made him get up, and giving him his arm led him, staggering, away.

Childish minds are very impressionable and the tale of the captain sank deep into ours. From that day Cususa took on collossal proportions for us, and we began to look on him as almost a legendary being, capable of the greatest deeds of heroism. We never again tormented him, we rather undertook to defend him with great zeal whenever any other little rascals tried to molest him.

A few months after the veteran's intervention in favor of the shoemaker, we were com-

ing out of school one afternoon, when we met a modest funeral. Four men were carrying the cheap coffin and behind them marched Captain Ramírez, with red eyes. Our noisy shouts made him turn his head and look at us a moment. He recognized us, and doubtless remembering the tale he had told us, exclaimed in a sorrowful voice: "It is he,—Joaquin!" We looked at each other, and with tacit agreement born spontaneously of one of those generous impulses so common to youth, we added ourselves to the cortege of the hero.

UN SANTO MILAGROSO

(A MIRACULOUS SAINT.)

IN a short time the fame of a certain miraculous image of San Jeronimo, of which extraordinary things, one might say miracles, were related, had spread through a part of the province of Alajuela. The residents of San Pedro de la Calabaza and of La Sabanilla showed especial enthusiasm, and the reputation of the saint already extended to the very capital of the province, where, to tell the truth, it met with considerable skepticism; but it must not be forgotten that the people of Alajuela are hardened unbelievers.

Whether the fellow citizens of Juan Santa Maria were right or not in showing their unbelief in respect of San Jeronimo, it is certain that now there was not a rosary, a candle burned in honor of a saint, nor any other festival at which one could not find the sainted image present. Everybody disputed for the notable honor of entertaining it, even though it were not more than a few hours. Its frequent journeys were triumphal, in the midst of a brilliant following, the splendor of which the music, sky-rockets and fire-crackers did not diminish. At first sight the image did not pre-

sent any marked peculiarity. It was a crude sculpture of wood, painted and varnished, of little more than a metre in height. The saint, dressed in an ordinary habit, trimmed with silver braid, was far from having the appearance of an ascetic; he rather resembled one of those corpulent, incontinent monks whom the Catalonian lithographs have made familiar. But this detail, which only some critical and evil-disposed persons of the city of Alajuela had noticed, did not affect in the least the devotion of his adorers, who never tired of making festivals in his honor, nor of kissing his feet.

The peregrinations of San Jeronimo finally attracted the attention of the authorities and even caused them alarm; but not on account of the manifestations of gross fanaticism which the image called forth from the country people, as in that matter there is always much tolerance. What worried the provincial authorities was something more serious; it was the increasing number of disorders and quarrels which arose on the passing of the saint, who left behind him a trail of blood. Any festival where he was present was sure to have a bad ending; with machete strokes and dagger thrusts almost always. In the criminal court several trials for homicide were in progress; the wounded were numerous, the bruised ones legion. The governor then resolved to take rigorous measures, ordering the jefes poli-

ticos* and the other subordinate officials to arrest San Jeronimo by all means and without loss of time; but their zeal was in vain. The saint disappeared like smoke after each one of his journeys, to reappear after some days, now in one place, now in another, when he was least expected. The disorders, the drunkenness and the machete strokes continued. Furious on account of all this, the governor did not cease from telegraphing the subordinate authorities to stimulate their zeal, and they now had no rest from their search for San Jeronimo.

Such was the situation when Pedro Villalta, a corporal of the customs guard, just as he was preparing to set out on a campaign with his fellow guards one afternoon, said to the governor:

"Don't you worry, Señor; I intend to bring you that rascally little saint."

On hearing this, the harassed official saw the heavens opening and was on the point of embracing Pedro Villalta; for the corporal was an old dog and most sagacious. That very night the governor announced, in the club which he frequented, that the capture of the saint was about to take place, a statement that was received with much incredulity, provoking many jokes and much chaff. "This San Jeronimo doesn't exist," declared Doctor Pradera. "It is a yarn of the San Pedro people to put you on the run."

*An officer somewhat similar to a mayor of a town.

The governor, somewhat nettled, replied: "You may laugh and say what you please, but I invite you all to pay a visit to the saint in the police barracks."

"Then I'll bet you a supper that you won't," exclaimed the commandant of the plaza, merrily.

"Accepted," said the governor.

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While the chief authority of the province was giving unmistakable proofs of his confidence in the ability of Pedro Villalta, that veteran and his comrades were riding silently along the high road to Puntarenas. They had ostentatiously taken that direction on setting out from Alajuela at night-fall, but when they had gone about half the distance to the little village of San José* the corporal reined in his horse and gave the order to turn back. The guards accustomed to these manœuvres, obeyed without grumbling. In returning they kept away from the city, following deserted lanes and byways, and making a circuit, finally arrived at the river of La Maravilla. Once on the other side of the bridge, the corporal said: "Now to La Sabanilla!" After riding some distance, Juan Rodriguez, a frank and good-natured Hercules, asked a question: "Corporal, if we are going to La Sabanilla, why have we made this big circuit?"

Some laughter was heard, but Villalta, who

*A small village bearing the same name as the Capital of Costa Rica, a few miles west of Alajuela.

liked Juan Rodriguez for his staunchness and courage, kindly explained to him that their detour was made so that the contraband liquor-makers might not be advised of the arrival of the guard. Juan, who was a new recruit, felt himself filled with admiration at the astuteness of his chief.

"Those people have spies and friends everywhere," continued Villalta. "But with me they get fooled, for I know all their tricks. This time I expect to bring in the still of the Arias." On hearing this name the guards pricked up their ears.

The Arias were no less than the most feared contrabandists of the whole country. Of the three brothers, José, Ramon and Antonio, one could not tell which was the worst. They had all made themselves famous by committing unheard of crimes and by giving proofs of their reckless courage in their encounters with the customs guard and in the numberless affrays which they stirred up wherever they went. There were those who said that more than a dozen men, guards and others, had gone to their eternal sleep on their account. In spite of so many atrocities, nobody was able to lay hands on them, and the three brothers continued tranquilly in their profitable industry, which was not only the distilling of brandy in an inaccessible ravine of La Sabanilla, but also the smuggling of great quantities of cognac, revolvers and ammunition, passing the

AN OLD STONE BRIDGE

packages through the very beards of the customs guards on the San Carlos.*

"Who are these Arias?" asked Juan Rodriguez again.

"The Arias are the worst bandits in Costa Rica. May God save you from ever meeting them," replied one of the guards.

"I'm not afraid of anybody," replied the good-natured Hercules, simply.

"I like that, Juan," said the corporal, who knew the courage of his subordinate. "But with the Arias it is not enough to be very brave and strong; one has also to be very quick on the trigger, for they are worse than the Old Nick himself."

Amusing themselves with this kind of talk, they reached Itiquis about nine o'clock in the evening. The corporal, who brought up the rear with Juan Rodriguez, heard the hoof-beats of a horse that seemed to be overtaking them and which was soon abreast of the party. Villalta accosted the horseman, whose presence was felt, but whom it was impossible to distinguish, such was the darkness of the night.

"Where are you going, my friend?"

"I'm going to La Sabanilla; and you?"

"We are going just a little beyond here."

"What a pity! We ought to ride together to the vela* of 'Ñor Juan Carvajal."

"Then 'Ñor Juan has a vela on for to-night?"

*A river in the northern part of Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan boundary.

*Celebration in honor of a saint.

"Yes, and they say it's going to be very fine. Good night, señores," added the horseman, starting on.

"May God take you safely, friend," replied Villalta.

When the stranger had gone he added between his teeth: "Tonight we're going to catch something. That old dolt of a Juan Carvajal isn't the first fox that's tried to fool me."

. . . . . .

The "vela" of 'Ñor* Juan Carvajal was very fine, as were all the festivals celebrated in his house, for besides being rich he was fond of display; that night, however, he wished to outdo even himself in honor of San Jeronimo, who was resplendent upon an improvised altar, adorned with long wax candles and artificial flowers. At night-fall, they had commenced to set off fire-crackers in the corridor of the house, and outside, the sky-rockets went up with a great rush, tracing a line of red gold in the sky and finally bursting high above with a sharp noise which reverberated through valleys and mountains, proclaiming for leagues around the glory of San Jeronimo and the splendor of his festival.

When the prayers, which were long, had been said, the ball commenced with a mazurka, played by a weird kind of an orchestra, composed of a trombone, a clarionette and sack-

*Contraction of Senor, used by the country people of Costa Rica.

but, which made one of those noises that once heard can never be forgotten. Not less than twenty couples were dancing in the large room, which was decorated with branches of "uruca" and plantain leaves in the doors and windows. In the adjoining room, upon a table covered with a spotless cloth, was a great quantity of crackers, rosquetes,* quesadillas, and sweet bread, not to mention two large trays full of biscuits and meat pies. While the young people were dancing, the older ones, who had prayed enough to satisfy their consciences, began to satisfy their stomachs with various delicacies and an accompaniment of coffee and chocolate. Many of them had made a regular day's journey to come from their homes to that of 'Ñor Juan, situated in a thinly inhabited district at considerable distance from any populated place; the women in oxcarts, the men on horseback or on foot.

When the mazurka was ended, 'Ña Dominga, the wife of 'Ñor Juan, circulated about with a small tray loaded with white paper cigarettes, and the dancers of both sexes began to smoke. Immediately afterwards an extraordinary ceremony commenced.

"Señores," said the master of the house, "let us adore the saint."

Suiting the deed to the word, he went up to the image and prostrating himself before it, kissed its feet for a long time. All the men, one after another, did the same. The women

*Sweet cakes much liked by the Costa Ricans.

showed themselves much less devout and there were only four or five who kissed the feet of San Jeronimo.

A waltz followed the mazurka, and after that came a second mazurka, the dances alternating with an equal number of adorations of the saint; and, an unheard of thing! the men began to get tipsy without drinking, for in all the house there were scarcely three bottles of diluted "Guaro"* for the women.

Among the women present four or five had more than their share of good looks, but none of them could rival Maria Carvajal, the niece of 'Ñor Juan. One could not find a more beautiful girl in all La Sabanilla, nor in San Pedro. Dressed in a low-necked camisa† covered with spangles, and a blue woolen skirt trimmed with braid, she was as fresh and dainty as a peach. All the young men present were hovering about her like bees around a flower, but hardly any of them succeeded in drawing very near, because the sweetheart of the girl was there beside her, a jealous man and of "few fleas,"‡ who permitted her to dance only with his intimate friends, keeping her for himself most of the time.

For the fourth time he was dancing with her to the tune of an awful composition, in the midst of which one could recognize bits of a Strauss waltz, when of a sudden the music ceased with a sad wail from the clarionette.

*Brandy made from sugar cane.

†Low-necked, short-sleeved garment worn by women of the Peon class.

‡A slang expression meaning short tempered.

"Halt with the dancing," cried an individual, standing with an insolent air in one end of the room. His right hand grasped the clarionette, which he had just snatched from the astonished musician. The new-comer, who seemed to be about twenty-seven years old, was a tall, robust young fellow, and would have been handsome had his face not been disfigured by the deep scar of a terrible machete stroke. His eyes, of an indefinite color, looked about with disquieting insolence. He wore a short riding jacket and had a red silk handkerchief knotted about his neck. Somebody pronounced his name: "José Arias," while he, quite calmly, was surveying all the women. He soon came to a decision, returned the clarionette to the terrified musician, went straight to Maria Carvajal, and, pushing aside her sweetheart without any preamble, embraced the girl with his sinewy arms and shouted: "Now the music, bandmaster!"

The musicians did not wait for a second order and began to play with ill-directed zeal, while the terrible contrabandist and Maria Carvajal circled about in the middle of the room, which became deserted while one could say amen. The women crossed themselves and called on their patron saints. The men, burning with wrath, went in search of their machetes.

The presence of José Arias at the "vela" was entirely casual, as no inhabitant of that

region would have cared to have such a guest in his house for many reasons; one of them, because when José Arias took it into his head to carry off a girl on the crupper of his horse, he carried her, and there was no help for it.

That night he was passing that way with a comrade in adventures, when he heard the music and saw the lights of the "vela."

His first idea was to ride in on horseback, as he was in the habit of doing in these affairs; but as he was not in a hurry, he thought it was better to act decently, limit himself to one dance with the prettiest girl, and then continue his journey. Having taken this peaceful resolution, he told his companion to wait for him a moment, dismounted, took off his spurs and as he was not intending to start a brawl, hung them on the pommel of his saddle, together with the long, cross-hilted machete which he unfastened from his belt. We have already seen what José Arias considered good behavior. His fierce and half-savage nature did not recognize any formalities, and he knew only how to act on the impulse of his desires and caprices. Thus it was that he did not understand the extent of his aggressive act and was surprised to see several men enter with unsheathed machetes.

"Ah, you coyotes!" he shouted, letting go of the girl who was trembling with fear. "Now you'll see who José Arias is."

With the quick decision of a man who feels

no fear, he cast a glance about in search of a weapon with which to defend himself. Seeing nothing better he darted to the altar, and pulled off the image with one jerk. San Jeronimo was terribly heavy, but the contrabandist, who was exceptionally strong, raised it with both hands, and without waiting for his adversaries, started forward to attack them. These now hesitated in their assault, all except the sweetheart of Maria Carvajal, who aimed a blow at him that fell like an axe-stroke upon the head of the saint.

"The Guards! The Guards!" shouted several voices from outside.

As if by magic, the enemies of the contrabandist slipped away. At that moment Juan Rodriguez entered, revolver in hand; but he scarcely had time to say "Surrender," when the poor fellow fell with his head battered by a tremendous saint-stroke. With the agility of a deer José Arias passed between the surprised guards. A moment afterwards, he was galloping away saluted by the shots that Villalta and his men fired after him; and as some of them wanted to follow him to avenge Juan Rodriguez, the corporal, who knew what kind of horses the bandit rode, said tersely:

"There's no use, boys. Let us stay here, for a bird in the hand is worth more than a hundred flying."

And what a fat bird the guards had trapped! Nothing less than the elusive San Jeronimo,

who lay at full length upon poor Juan Rodriguez, whose companions helped him to get up. The corporal became absorbed in examining the saint. Suddenly he gave a shout of joy.

"Now I see the trick! Now I see the trick!" he exclaimed, at the same time moving an ingenious mechanism, concealed in one of the toes on the left foot of the image, and from which a little stream of contraband brandy spurted forth. San Jeronimo was bleeding "Guaro."

Pedro Villalta, more pleased than if he had discovered the Americas, raised the image and putting it again upon the altar said to his wonder-struck companions:

"Boys, let us adore the saint," and in order to set the example he kissed with devotion the foot of the blessed one.

. . . . . .

On the following night, while San Jeronimo, with his head broken, lay in his prison, the governor of Alajuela and his friends supped merrily, invited by the commandant of the plaza, who had lost his bet.

LA POLITICA

(POLITICS.)

BY the dying light of a tallow candle, stuck in a bottle, Evaristo was reading with difficulty the leaflet which had been given him that morning on the streets of San José.

Seated in a large leather covered armchair, his father old 'Ñor Juan Alvarez, gamonal* of the village of San Miguel, listened to the reading of the leaflet, which was a violent diatribe of a coarse nature against the candidate of the progressive party for the next presidential campaign. The anonymous author heaped rhetorical injuries upon him, and called his followers traitors and slaves. These virulent expressions of campaign parlance did not make much of an impression on the mind of the old man; all of that jargon was little less than Greek to him; but when Evaristo came to the part where it was said that the candidate was a heretic who never went to mass and would close up the churches if he came into power, he knit his eyebrows, disturbed and disgusted. The article ended with a hyperbolical eulogy of the candidate of the opposing

*The leading citizen of a village.

faction called the Nationalist party, and the enumeration of the advantages and benefits which would accrue to the country on his coming to the presidency, among which shone in the first line the liberty to make brandy and plant tobacco.* Guaro and tobacco free! This was the "in hoc signo vinces" of the party.

"What a fine thing!" exclaimed Evaristo enthusiastically. "It probably isn't true," replied the old man, who was skeptical, as is natural to old age. "I don't believe what these papers say."

"Well, I believe every bit of it," said the young man. "Don Manuel told me this morning, when I was paying him the reales I owed him, that the National party is the good one."

Don Manuel was a pharmacist of San José, to whom Evaristo took his doubts.

"And I tell you that you mustn't believe all that about free guaro and tobacco."

Evaristo shook his head obstinately. The old man continued: "I have already told you that the licenciado Castrillo, who knows more than Don Manuel because he is a lawyer, said to me last week that everything the Nationalists are telling is a lie, and that one mustn't pay any attention to it."

The young man did not dare to keep on replying, but the arguments of his father did

*The Costa Rican government has a monoply on the manufacture of liquor, and formerly on tobacco also.

LAGO DE NICARAGUA
NICARAGUA
11
10
9
Rio Sarapiqui
Rio San Carlos
Volcano Cuipilapa
Miravalles
ALAJUELA
GUANACASTE
GOLD MINING ZONE
Volcano Poas
Alajuela
Heredia
Cartago
CARTAGO
Limon
Puntarenas
Esparza
Orotina
Puntarenas
Tilaran
Liberia
Volcano Rincon de la Vieja
Bagaces
Cañas
Bebedero
Volcano Arenal
Volcano Irazu
Volcano Turrialba
Volcano Barba
Volcano Cacho Negro
Volcano Chirripo
Volcano Tres Equis
Volcano Pelon
Volcano Tres Amigos
Volcano Pelado
Volcano Tres Hermanos
Volcano Cerro Pelado
Volcano Cerro Pelado
Volcano Cerro Pelado

ATLANTIC OCEAN
CARIBBIAN SEA
SAN JUAN DEL NORTE
PUERTO LIMON
CARTAGO
del Toro
PANAMA
GOLFO DULCE
BAHIA DE DAVID
84 Longitude West from Greenwich
83

not convince him, for the reason that he considered them partial, because the old man was a progressist.

Some months before the birth of the new party which was now making such a disturbance, the old man was passing one morning in front of the office of the jefe politico, when the latter spied him and made him come into his sanctum, when he said to him: "'Ñor Juan, you are an honest, industrious and orderly man; everybody in San Miguel respects and likes you; for that reason, and on account of the good feeling I have for you, I want you to be the first to sign the list of adherents to the progressist candidate."

The old man, disagreeably surprised, did not know what to answer. Motionless, with his eyes fastened on the feet of the official, his opposition was evident, for, like a true country man, he was suspicious and did not like to make promises, and even less to sign any agreement. The politician persisted:

"Our candidate is a perfect gentleman, good and honorable, who will work for the well being of the country. You know very well that I am incapable of giving you bad advice."

As the old man still kept silent, inspecting the floor, the official added, after a pause:

"Well, some other day we'll talk it over more at leisure, but now let's go and take a drink like good friends." And without giving him time to reply, he took the gamonal's arm

familiarly and led him to La Sirena, the best and most elegant pulperia* of San Miguel. One hour later, 'Ñor Juan returned to his house with his ideas considerably twisted from oft-repeated glasses of rum, not so much so however that he could not remember that he had returned with the politician to his office and that his signature was there inscribed on a sheet of paper, below certain written lines, which he could not read for the very good reason that he did not know how. And in this wise 'Ñor Juan Alvarez had become a progressist. With the bait of the gamonal's signature, the jefe politico was able to ensnare all the leading citizens of San Miguel, because 'Ñor Juan always brought over the opinions of his fellow citizens, among whom he enjoyed the reputation of a prudent and honest man.

Thus it was that when afterwards the first emissaries of the opposing party arrived, they soon returned disappointed saying that nothing could be done in that village, so unanimously progressist in sentiment. But their labors were not on that account entirely fruitless. The seed sown sprung up in the end. There were two or three citizens of independent and rebellious spirit who enrolled themselves in the Nationalist ranks, and little by little those who did not like the jefe politico began to join them, forming altogether a small but turbulent

*A general store in Central America, where liquors and all kinds of merchandise are sold.

group who carried on an active campaign; but as 'Ñor Juan remained immovable, the majority of the village remained equally firm, with a few exceptions.

Among these was the son of the gamonal, Evaristo, who had allowed himself to be seduced by the promises and flattery of the apostles of the new party; and although he continued among the progressists out of consideration for his father, in his inmost soul he was a Nationalist.

The priest, closely watched by the jefe politico, was very cautious at the beginning. Neither did the women show any great interest in the affairs of politics.

Nevertheless there came a time when one could notice signs of agitation among them, especially in the guild of church workers, these symptoms coinciding with certain rumors that the progressist candidate was nothing less than the Antichrist.

As soon as he had learned of these fabulous stories, the jefe politico, who was not slow, hastened to inform his superiors that the priest of San Miguel was working in favor of the Nationalist candidate.

One day the gamonal's wife and his two daughters, Agapita and Ester, came home very much scandalized by what they had heard in the street from their friends and village gossips, that the progressists were lost to salvation; that they were all masons; that it was

not possible that their husband and father, so religious and so good, could be one of those heretic liberals, etc.

The old man, disturbed by these things which the alarmed women told him, took advantage of an occasion when he wanted to sell some corn to go to San José and consult the licenciado Castrillo, the man who had his complete confidence. Castrillo was a progressist and one can understand that 'Ñor Juan came out of his house somewhat more tranquil. He made this evident to his family when he returned at night saying that they were not to give credit to any of those tales of masons and of shutting the churches.

Evaristo did not say a word. Agapita and Ester looked with significance at their mother, to incite her to answer. After a moment of silence 'Ña Mercedes spoke: "Of course, it must be true, as that gentleman has said so, but what I know is that the people of the Centers* haven't any religion." The gamonal made no reply, but his silence indicated that his wife's remark had struck home. On seeing him thus, so wrapped in thought, the women believed that the moment had arrived for making a decisive attack on the vacillating mind of the head of the family, and they hinted to him that he ought to break away from the progressist party so as not to lose his soul.

*(Author's Note.) The country people of Costa Rica call those who live in the cities and especally persons of consequence, "gentes del centro" or people of the centres.

"I won't change," shouted the old man, striking the table, on which he was leaning, with his fist. "I have already given my signature and it is settled."

On hearing the blow, the women betook themselves to the kitchen in two jumps, and after that scene there was no more talk of parties nor of politics, until the day when Evaristo brought the leaflet from San José, after the reading of which the gamonal remained much preoccupied, asking himself if, after all, what was said in it might not be true, and doubts began to assail his soul. Agapita and Ester, who came in with the supper for the two men, succeeded in arousing their father from the profound meditation in which he was submerged. Behind them came José, a little boy of five years, son of Agapita, who was a widow. His grandfather, who was very fond of him, gave him a caress and seated himself at the table in silence.

"Ave Maria purissima," said a voice from outside at that moment.

"En Gracia concedida," replied the women. In the doorway was outlined the silhouette of a man.

"Does the Señor Juan Alvarez live here?" asked the voice.

"Yes, señor. Come in," answered 'Ña Mercedes, who came from the kitchen.

"May God give you a very good night," said the new arrival, entering the house. "May the Lord make you all saints."

"Amen," responded the family in chorus.

"Have the goodness to be seated, Señor," said the widow, drawing up an armchair for the sweet-tongued unknown.

"Many thanks, Señora, but first I wish to know one thing: this house, is it of God, or of the devil?"

"Of God, Señor!" exclaimed the frightened women.

"Very well, then you are of the Nationalist party."

A painful silence followed this assertion, and Evaristo turned to look at the old man, who lowered his head before the cold glance of the unknown one, who continued:

"A christian as honorable as Señor Juan Alvarez can not be with the masons, who are going to burn the churches."

The gamonal felt terrified on hearing this. Then it was all true!

"And of what party are you?" 'Ña Mercedes mustered courage to ask.

"I? Of the party of Our Lord. Now you may see my candidate—" and on saying this he drew a crucifix out of his breast pocket, the feet of which he kissed with devotion. The whole family remained awe-struck before that act of piety, and José to see better what he had in his hand, ran and placed himself between the knees of the stranger.

"What a beautiful child!" exclaimed the latter, on seeing him. "What an intelligent little

face he has. I don't know why, but I have a feeling that he is going to be a priest."

Agapita felt like crying out for pure gratitude, and none of them had eyes enough to contemplate that extraordinary man of such a venerable aspect. 'Ñor Juan forgot to eat his supper. In his clean-shaven, weather-beaten face, of the old Castilian type, to which he belonged by descent, was painted the inward conflict which he was carrying on. The gamonal belonged to the old race of honest country people, who never were false to what they had once promised by tracing a cross and pulling out a hair from the beard; and he had not only promised the jefe politico to support the progressist candidate, but had also mechanically signed "Juan Albares" on the list of adherents, and that signature he considered as sacred. Yet, on the other hand, how was it possible that he, such a good catholic, so god-fearing, would contribute his vote to the bringing into power of a man who proposed to make an end of religion? All the fanaticism of his race rose up in revolt at the sting of this thought. While the gamonal was absorbed in such intricate problems, the man of the crucifix was chatting pleasantly with the women, and made them presents of scapularies, with which he was well provided. Into the mouth of José he put a gumdrop, and the child, with the curiosity natural to his years, asked what his name was. He,

giving him a kiss on his dirty face, told it to him; Simeon Garcia.

"Ah, you are Don Simeon!" exclaimed the widow, opening wide her eyes. "Everybody says that you are a saint."

"I am no more than a poor sinner, who does not want the people to be cheated," modestly responded Don Simeon.

In the next room a child began to cry. It was the youngest son of Agapita, only six months old, who had been born after the death of his father, which was caused by a hydropathic cure. To carry out the directions of a doctor, who had prescribed a dozen sea baths, the man set out for Puntarenas, having his oxcart loaded with coffee. Scarcely had he delivered it at the warehouse when he took religiously one after another and on the same day the dozen baths. A little remittent bilious fever then undertook to complete the cure.

Don Simeon manifested a great desire to see the child, and went into ecstacies over his angelic beauty, although in truth he was sufficiently ugly. The mother took the child in her arms to quiet him, while 'Ña Mercedes in a low tone implored Don Simeon to use his influence with her husband, obstinately determined to remain a progressist. Agapita also put in her oar: "Por Dios! Don Simeon, tell 'tata'* to change."

*(Author's Note.) Used for papa by the country people.

OXCARTS LOADED WITH COFFEE

"Here is one who is all powerful," replied the holy man, drawing out the crucifix again.

When he returned to the room where the gamonal had remained, the latter invited him very cordially to supper. Scarcely had he accepted, when the women hastened to bring out the very best of their good cheer to serve to so illustrious a guest. Ester brought some frijoles† that had a delicious odor, and some hot tortillas, 'Ña Mercedes a foamy cup of chocolate, which she herself had beaten up, and a loaf of sweet bread. When supper was over, the two men conversed a long while alone. In the kitchen 'Ña Mercedes, Evaristo and Ester whispered, awaiting the result of the interview, while the widow lulled the baby with a monotonous song:

"Arrurru ninito,
Cabeza de ayote.
Si no te dormis
Te come el coyote."

When the conference was finished, 'Ñor Juan called his wife and children. When they came in he said to them: "Don Simeon wishes that we say the rosary."

. . . . . .

The following day was Sunday. From eight o'clock in the morning the people who were going to attend the principal mass began to arrive at the church. The men wore their new jackets, Panama hats, and trousers sup-

†Beans.

ported at the hips by colored sashes. The women were gay in their rebozos* of bright colored silk, their starched petticoats rustling loudly beneath skirts of alpaca or chintz, nicely ironed with much care. Those who came from distant points had their heads covered with wide brimmed Panama hats, and some carried parasols. From time to time one might see the wife and daughters of some prominent villager, majestically displaying pañolones† of black silk embroidered with pink flowers, and large necklaces and ear-rings of silver-plated filigree.

At the second tolling of the bells Don Simeon arrived, very lavish with his smiles and salutations. A little after him came the family of 'Ñor Juan, the widow in deep mourning, Ester fresh and pretty as a rosebud, a nice little morsel for a priest, as the jefe politico, who was an unbelieving libertine, irreverently remarked. The mass lasted an hour. Don Simeon edified everybody by his beautiful piety.

At the moment of lifting the host the blows that he gave himself in the breast resounded throughout the whole church. There was no doubt of it, that man was a saint.

The gamonal and Evaristo, seated behind him, could not admire enough the devout air with which he listened to the sermon, which that day was very pointed, touching upon the

*Long, narrow shawls worn by women of the poor class.
†Large china silk shawls worn by the women of the upper class in Costa Rica.

obligation which was incumbent on all the faithful to defend their religion menaced by liberals and masons. The priest had resolutely taken off his mask.

At the doors of the church various individuals distributed leaflets to the people as they came out from mass; some of the progressist party, others of the national. Two groups of seed-sowers, sent out by the rival political clubs, had taken possession of the plaza, each having a corner to itself, where the orators who were to speak were standing ready upon tables lent by enthusiastic partisans. The speakers of each party had the floor in turn, and the large crowd of citizens of San Miguel kept moving about to hear first one and then the other. Little or nothing did the good countrymen understand of all those harangues, delivered with so much enthusiasm by the young delegates of the central clubs; but as the Nationalists were the ones entrusted with the defense of their religion, everything that they said seemed right, above all when they threw out such bits of flattery as "the people whose sovereignty must be re-established, breaking the chains of twenty years of dictatorship, etc." The last one to speak was a progressist of much eloquence, who in concluding said:

"What our party desires is to raise the country to the heights of modern civilization, continuing the work of former administrations

which have already made so much progress. They tell you that we wish to destroy religion. It is false. In the first place we respect all religious beliefs, and above all the catholic religion, which is that of our fathers. You must not allow yourselves to be deceived by these absurd and ridiculous stories which hypocritical and evil disposed persons have undertaken to spread abroad. Because, señores, if the progressist party were what they say, there would not be with us such honorable and religious men as Señor Juan Alvarez, here present."

At that moment the gamonal was the mark for all glances. Wedged in among the listeners, he tried to hide himself to conceal his confusion. Then, as the crowd began to disperse, the melodious voice of Don Simeon was heard saying: "Señores, you have already heard the arguments of these young gentlemen. Now let us put them to the proof. I ask those who wish to form part of the Nationalist club of San Miguel to have the goodness to follow me."

Three quarters of the group of citizens followed after Don Simeon, who on seeing that 'Ñor Juan Alvarez, surrounded by a few faithful ones, did not move, added, addressing himself to him in an incisive tone:

"Don't you wish to accompany us, señor?"

The gamonal's face grew red and he did not answer. The nationalist group waited. It

was a terrible struggle that raged in the breast of the old countryman during those moments.

"Yes, Don Simeon," he finally answered. Behind him came all the rest of the people.

"Viva 'Ñor Juan Alvarez!" cried an enthusiast.

"Viva!" responded the retinue of Don Simeon, with a ringing shout.

About the progressists only ten or twelve individuals remained, among whom was the village school-master.

"Miserable flock of sheep!" exclaimed one of the young liberals, who could not contain himself.

"They were born to be sheared," murmured another.

Then as there was nothing to be done there now they went to drown their chagrin in "La Sirena" with some of the campaign funds.

From the memorable day on which he deserted the flag of the enemies of the church, 'Ñor Juan was more than ever the king of his village. Elected president of the Nationalist club of San Miguel, his prestige was now considerably increased in proportion to the honor which his fellow citizens had conferred on him. Every little while pamphlets and packages of printed matter arrived for him, directed to Don Juan Alvarez, President, etc., etc., and when he went to the city the leading gentlemen of the party received him with much con-

sideration, and even slapped him on the back, saying:

"The triumph is ours. What is wanted is great firmness." To which he invariably replied:

"Don't worry about that. The people are solid for our candidate." And this was the truth. Yet that which finally gave the people of San Miguel such a great idea of the importance of their gamonal, was the visit which he paid the candidate in company with Don Simeon. There was not one citizen, great or small, who did not know about the memorable interview with all its details; the glass of beer and the cigar which the future chief executive had given him and the affectionate words he had said to him.

Nevertheless the new position of the gamonal was not all flowers. There was no lack of adversities to embitter his triumph; one of the most serious of which was the amount of money that his presidency cost him; dollars here to aid the campaign, dollars there to celebrate the happenings favorable to the cause, more dollars to get a friend out of the straits caused by his political enthusiasm, credit to fellow partisans with few scruples. In short, not a day passed that he did not have to loosen the strings of his purse. Another mortification was the jefe politico, whose ironical glance he could not endure. He avoided meeting him, because, in spite of every-

thing, an internal voice reproached him for his conduct. The imperturbable confidence of the official in the final triumph of his cause occasioned him uneasiness; his mocking little smile when he heard the harangues and threats of the excited partisans he considered a bad omen, and, on account of what might happen, he always evaded replying to the cutting sarcasms which his former friend directed at him. He did not believe it prudent to break off entirely with that man who went often to the capital, who talked with the governor, with the minister, and even with the president himself. But not all the citizens of San Miguel had the same diplomacy as the gamonal. More than one, made courageous by numerous libations in honor of the candidate, had allowed himself to utter shouts and expressions prejudicial to the principal authority of the people. The punishment was not long in coming. Those who made the most disturbance went to reside in the cuartel.

Evaristo, thanks to the position which his father had always occupied in the village and the consideration which the authorities had for him on that account, had not yet served his time in the army, and he imagined that the time for shouldering a gun would never arrive for him. Vain illusion! One day a corporal presented himself at the house and carried away the youth, with five or six others. That night 'Ñor Juan lay awake thinking that such

a misfortune would not have happened in the days when he was on friendly terms with the jefe politico.

The absence of Evaristo, who was his right arm, the time which his duties as president of the club required, and the many expenses which the position caused him, brought great disorder to the business affairs of the gamonal, usually so well managed. Thus it was that as an important note, in favor of a bank, was about to become due, 'Ñor Juan found with dismay that it would not be possible for him to pay it at the stipulated time, a thing which would happen for the first time in his life. Much worried, he went to consult the lawyer Castrillo, to ask his aid in getting out of the difficulty. The latter calmed him, advising him to request a renewal of the note, a thing which would not be difficult to obtain, considering the good reputation which his signature and that of his surety, Toribio Cascante, had always enjoyed.

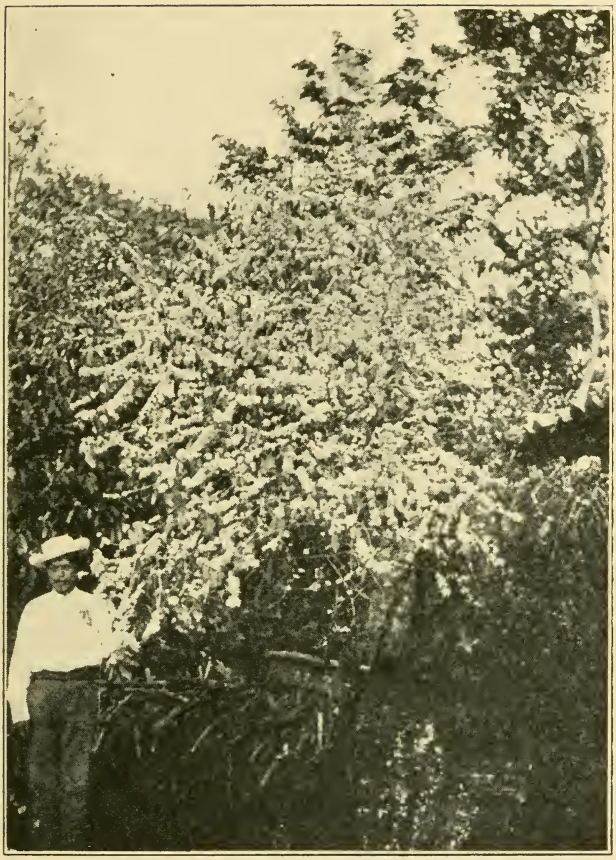
The gamonal went to the bank with considerable dread, for he considered it a dishonor to ask for a renewal. The manager, who always had treated him with much deference, as is customary in banks when dealing with persons who have money, received him this time with coldness and reserve. 'Ñor Juan explained the situation to him, making plain that his financial distress was but temporary, but the manager, who had listened to him

absent-mindedly, cut him short, saying dryly: "I am very sorry, Señor Alvarez, but it is impossible. You understand that the bank is obliged to be very prudent, in view of the disagreeable aspect political affairs are assuming." These last words were said with a certain significant tone. The countryman went out ashamed and with tears in his eyes; still, as it was necessary to pay, he had to seek for the money in another direction. A coffee buyer promised it to him, but it was not possible to finish the matter, because Toribio Cascante did not wish to continue acting as security for his friend, whom he reproached for going into politics, which was a bad thing he said. There was then no other remedy than to go to a money lender, who let him have the money on a mortgage at a very high rate of interest.

"If you hadn't been so stupid as to go into politics"—the lawyer said to him, when they went out of the money lender's house—"the thing could have been arranged in the bank; but, my friend, you have allowed yourself to be foolishly deceived by the Nationalists, and now you must take the consequences."

These words made the gamonal discern that, if politics for a certain few is a source of profit and satisfaction, for the majority it brings only sorrows and tribulations. The joy of triumph came to sweeten somewhat the bitterness caused him by the misfortunes which

have been related. It is true that Evaristo remained in the cuartel and a ruinous mortgage weighed upon his coffee plantation, La Lima, but, on the other hand, it was a great pleasure to have conquered, to have saved religion, the supremacy of the people, menaced by those bandits of progressists. And what a splendid victory was that of the National party in San Miguel! In vain were all the efforts and threats of the jefe politico. It was of no avail that the progressists, who were in the majority at the electoral table, took the first two days of the elections to inscribe the fourteen votes which remained to their party in the village. The mass of the good people, who, restrained by organized force, were awaiting their turn with impatience, was finally able to reach the table on the last day, drowning in an instant with the tide of their votes the poor little fourteen of their adversaries. And what tenacity those enemies of God had, for did they not try to take by force that which the ballot-boxes had denied them? When this happened, 'Ñor Juan Alvarez was one of the first to rush to the defence of the imperilled reward at the head of the men of San Miguel, and passed a whole night laying siege to the capital, disposed to make the constitution respected and also to run away should the troops draw near. Still, one could not ask more of a man armed only with a machete.



A COFFEE TREE IN BLOSSOM

At last came the great day of the final triumph. The gamonal, who was ordinarily very self-contained, could not resist the desire to celebrate worthily the advent of the executive of his choice. When at night he returned to San Miguel, after the illuminations and fireworks, in company with his faithful fellow villagers he entered the village like a mad man, shouting and executing pirouettes on horseback. In one of these the animal slipped and fell, breaking one of his master's legs. 'Ñor Juan was laid up more than three months and spent a considerable sum of money on doctor's visits, only to remain lame after all.

At the outset, 'Ñor Juan Alvarez recovered his former influence with the new jefe politico. This however did not last long, for, greatly to the scandal of all the good citizens who had aided in creating the new regime, the official was not long in getting on friendly terms with the progressists of San Miguel, especially with the proprietor of La Sirena, who had been the head of the party there. According to what the evil tongues said, the astute shopkeeper gave on credit to the politician all the cognac that he could drink, so that six months after the great triumph, which had cost so much labor, those who really governed the village were the keeper of the pulperia and his friends, with great detriment to the conquerors. The disgusted villagers complained among themselves, and there were even some who missed

the former jefe politico, who after all was amiable and obliging. An anonymous letter against the new man, which a daily paper of the capital published, finished the work of spoiling things, strengthening the union of the official and the progressists, who wrote another letter in which they hotly defended him and censured the wayward and rebellious spirit of certain citizens of San Miguel, who aspired only to command.

The relations between the jefe politico and the villagers became embittered to such a degree that 'Ñor Juan Alvarez, at the request of many of the citizens, resolved to make use of his influence with the president to have the official removed from office.

He set out one morning, full of confidence, remembering the cordiality of the reception which the president had given him when he was a candidate. As he was riding to the city, the details of the interview came to his mind; the friendly words, the cigar, the glass of beer, the protests of good will. "As soon as I talk to him everything will be arranged," thought the gamonal, as he sat in the antechamber, in company with ten or twelve other persons. After three hours of waiting, his confidence was not so great, and when his turn arrived, and an aid directed him to enter the office of the chief of the government, he completely lost his former self-confidence. One glance sufficed to inform him that the man be-

fore him was not now the good-natured, smiling candidate, who had received him with so much affability. Cold and grave, his glance calmly inquiring, the president asked him the motive of his visit. 'Ñor Juan, much disturbed, explained to him, timidly and with hesitation, the legitimate complaints of the Nationalists in San Miguel against the jefe politico, and their desire that he be removed. With unexpected severity, the magistrate rebuked him for the spirit of rebellion which the people of San Miguel had been showing for some time, and insisted on the necessity of respecting the authorities. Then he said that he knew the jefe politico personally, that he was a good man and worthy of his entire confidence, incapable of abusing it; that his relations with the progressists were far from constituting a fault, rather it was a proof of his amiable and conciliatory disposition. Moreover, it was well that things were as they were, for the country was desirous of tranquillity, and the hatreds stirred up by the electoral battle should be forgotten. The countryman went out from the interview much crestfallen and returned to his village with his ears drooping.

. . . . . .

To the enthusiasm of the conflict and the joy of victory in San Miguel succeeded the most bitter disenchantment. The chains of twenty years of dictatorship were to have been

broken, the sovereignty of the people was to have been re-established, the slothful men of the former administrations were to have been swept aside, but the truth was that everything remained the same. Religion was not triumphant, nor were "guaro" and tobacco free, nor had anyone a dollar more in his pocket. What had the citizens of San Miguel gained by the change? To be sure they had been given a new jefe politico. A great gain indeed, since everybody was anxious to have him leave! The progressists laughed at the dissatisfaction of their adversaries, and when the latter complained of having been cheated with false promises, they answered: "They were right in taking you for fools. If our candidate were in power it would be another cock that is crowing. At least you would not have this jefe politico who bothers you so much." In all the village the only one who said nothing was Toribio Cascante, the former surety of 'Ñor Juan Alvarez. He neither despised the jefe politico nor desired the return of the former one, nor clamored for the promised suppression of the monopoly on brandy and tobacco. This rustic philosopher had never believed in any of the promises of the parties that were contending for power; and while the others lost time in talking, in agitating themselves, in drinking, he kept quietly on with his farm labor and habitual tasks, without worrying over the fact that they call-

ed him "pancista,"* and said he was of the cat party, that is to say, one of those who always land on their feet. It was thus that his affairs had prospered. The coffee plantation gave good returns, the cattle were bursting with fatness, and every Saturday he returned from the market with his pockets full of money. In contrast with this pleasing situation, that of 'Ñor Juan Alvarez was more distressing each day. The enormous interest that the money lender charged was an ulcer that was eating away his fortune, already so impaired. The small crop which La Lima produced, on account of lack of assistance during the absence of Evaristo, completed the work of demoralizing things, and the gamonal, seeing that he was on the road to inevitable ruin, began to lose heart.

"Toribio Cascante is the only one who can get me out of these difficulties," he used often to say in the bosom of his family, but since the wealthy philosopher had refused to keep on acting as his security the relations between the two neighbors and friends had grown cool. This did not prevent Cascante from making prudent observations, when 'Ñor Juan became a member of the Orthodox League, a clerical association whose ramifications extended throughout the whole country like the tentacles of a monstrous octopus, a branch of which the priest had just founded in San Miguel. The citizens, discontented with the

*One who is on the fence.

government and having still fresh in their imaginations the stupid arguments with which the nationalists had awakened their dormant religious fanaticism, rallied with enthusiasm to the new standard. 'Ñor Juan Alvarez was elected president of the orthodox club, and each day conceived a greater liking for politics. Nevertheless, when the priest told him that the cause of religion was very poor and that it was necessary for all true believers to make a pecuniary sacrifice in order to help their triumph, he felt as though they had dashed a bucket of cold water over him. He stammered a few excuses and vague explanations about his embarrassed financial situation. But the priest, who knew the habitual avarice of the country people, replied indignantly that as a rich and influential man he had to set the example; that his fondness for worldly things was a great sin in the eyes of God, who had heaped good things upon him; that our Lord returns a hundred fold the alms that are given him, and that it would not be a bad thing for him to look a little more after his soul's salvation. The old man, with grief in his heart, had to detach himself from a considerable sum. A little while afterwards the opportunity presented itself for testing the enormous political power which the Orthodox League represented.

The time had arrived for renewing half of the congress, and the real leaders behind the scenes who pulled the wires of the association felt sure of the triumph of the clerical ticket.

In the morning of the day appointed for the voting, the electors of San Miguel, who had confessed the evening before, received the sacrament very early before setting out on what the priest compared to a new crusade. At the front went the gamonal, who, during the whole trip, did not cease to admonish them to follow faithfully the instructions which the priest had given them. Everybody proclaimed his obedience with much warmth, but on arriving at the capital, each having in his pocket the neatly folded list which had just been given him at the central club of the league, their firmness had to withstand a rude assault. Gathered there were all the most influential men of the nationalist and progressist parties working together for one and the same ticket which was opposed to that of the clergy. The countryman looked with stupefaction at the intimate union of men, who, two years before, had been desirous of killing each other and had called one another bandits and scoundrels in the newspapers, in the clubs and in public places.

Well did Toribio Cascante say that the people who wore frock coats* were all the same kind of monkeys with different tails. There was one moment when the gamonal himself felt that he was faltering, and that was when Don Simeon and the lawyer Castrillo tried to dissuade him from voting for the

*In Spanish "gente de levita." The country people of Costa Rica thus refer to the upper class.

league. Don Simeon confabulating with the masons! What was the world coming to, when even the saints were turning against God! But the gamonal was too religious to break a promise made under the auspices of the sacrament of the confession and the mystery of the eucharist. So the seductive voice of Don Simeon uttered his best arguments in vain; 'Ñor Juan Alvarez remained firm as a rock. Contrary to the hope of the clericals, their ticket was defeated throughout almost the whole country, owing to the coalition of the advanced elements, and in great part also to the numerous desertions from the ranks of the league at the last hour.

Nevertheless the triumph was by a small margin and the clerical propaganda continued more active and powerful than ever, aided by the discords of the liberals, who broke forth into dissentions again at the very time of their victory, forgetting the famous motto: "In union there is strength." The league, concealing its rancor, offered its aid to the weak and wavering administration, which, making certain concessions, hastened to accept it. This state of affairs, however, could not last long, because the league felt itself sufficiently vigorous to get on alone and repulsed the idea of adopting a political head which was not selected freely by itself from among the most docile and inane. Of the fourteen progressists of San Miguel, some had joined the league. The rest

TROOP OF CAVALRY PASSING CENTRAL PARK

did not know which of the liberal candidates to choose, because the latter, not to go back on their custom, were at loggerheads. Therefore when the elections came the triumph of the clerical party there, as well as in all the rest of the country, was astonishing. The gamonal rubbed his hands together with pleasure, thinking that this time, with the coming into power of his friends, who had promised to aid him, he was going to get out of debt. The priest could scarcely contain himself in his skin, considering as good as abolished all those hateful laws made by those demons of liberals; the secularization of cemeteries, laical education, civil marriage and so on; but above all he rejoiced in the blessed re-establishment of the tithes, offerings of first-fruits and other sinecures, although he thought it more prudent to say nothing to his parishioners on this point. But the illusions of the members of the league were not to last long. In the midst of their rejoicing they forgot that in the admirable hand which they held there was one card lacking. Their adversaries, on the other hand, had only one, but that was the best, or the worst, as you prefer—the trump of swords.* In the final elections the league was beaten, or more correctly, they were told that they were beaten, so that their fusion with those who had before been their worst enemies profited them nothing. They tried to re-enact the fa-

*There is a play on words here that cannot be translated into English. In a Spanish pack of cards the suit, corresponding to spades, is called "Espadas" or "Swords."

mous farce played four years ago by the national party. Poor Orthodox League! they forgot that the progressists, those monsters of iniquity, who after all were only sheep in wolves' clothing, tyrants who did not shed blood, were not now in power. The clericals learned on this occasion, with some detriment to their ribs, that everything varies as the glass through which one looks. The cavalry took charge of gathering in the excited countrymen who were trying to remember those patriotic songs about the restored sovereignty of the people, of the breaking of the chains of twenty years of dictatorship, and others not less pretty, forgetting that it is quite another thing when sung with the guitar. Evaristo, 'Ñor Juan, the priest, and some more from San Miguel, went to take up their abode in the various prisons in which some nationalists of last year acted as hosts to their former fellow partisans, doubtless to recompense them for having believed in their promises. The women were left to die, as is natural, thinking of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers.

In the house of 'Ñor Juan the affliction was greater than ever, because the usurer, holder of the mortgage which hung over La Lima, had just commenced suit for non-payment, at that time so full of distress for them. By the gateway of politics all the misfortunes of that peaceful home had entered. A week passed without their being able to learn anything of

OXCARTS ON A COUNTRY ROAD

the prisoners. The wife and daughters of the gamonal had gone twice to San José, in search of news, but all their efforts had been in vain, and they had had to return more disheartened than ever, after having looked at the silent walls of the different prisons, for they did not even know in which of them the two men were. Alarming rumors concerning the prisoners were rife among the people and the poor women were in despair when they heard them. Toribio Cascante advised them to ask the jefe politico to use his influence in favor of the prisoners, and the proprietor of La Sirena, who was a leading man in the new party which had just been born out of nothing, promised to help their petition with his powerful influence. 'Ña Mercedes went very humbly to see the official, accompanied by her daughter Ester, who was not now the rosebud which the former jefe politico had so much admired, but a beautiful flower that inflamed the desires of the new one. The poor old woman begged in tears for the compassion of the man who was able to return her husband and son to her, and he, without promising anything, said that he would see, that he would talk it over, but that the thing was very difficult, inasmuch as both father and son were much involved in that terrible attempt against law and order, which it had been necessary to drown in blood. As the women were leaving, the jefe politico took ad-

vantage of the moment when 'Ña Mercedes was going out first, to say to Ester:

"Come back alone and we will talk about it."

. . . . . .

Early in the morning, the family of the gamonal set out from San Miguel. The three women and the youngest child of the widow were riding in the oxcart which Evaristo was driving, with his goad on his shoulder. Behind came 'Ñor Juan Alvarez and his grandson José, on foot. All remained silent, oppressed with a great sadness, because they had to leave that well-beloved village, where they had enjoyed good fortune and plenty for so many years. But the usurer had been implacable and the auction of La Lima had taken place. Toribio Cascante had bought it for a third of its value, because as he said, "Business is business."

Deeply affected by the loss of his beloved coffee plantation, the gamonal did not wish to keep on living in San Miguel, although he still had his house and another small bit of land. He sold everything, so as to go and establish himself in a distant place where he had a tract of uncultivated land among the mountains. When he passed in front of La Lima, that fine coffee plantation which twenty years before he had set out with his own hands, a tear rolled down the weather-beaten cheeks of the poor old man. He could scarcely believe

that that fertile land was no longer his. The little child was sleeping in the lap of its mother. José, with the indifference of childhood, was amusing himself with the incidents of the road, making the dogs bark or throwing pebbles at the chickens which were scratching about. At the top of the hill called Jocote the travellers halted. In the centre of the smiling valley which lay spread out at their feet could be seen a white dot,—it was the church of San Miguel. The gamonal contemplated it for a long time with deep emotion, and after a while he exclaimed with resignation:

"God be praised that he oppresses but does not crush entirely. If it had not been for the jefe politico, who knows where Evaristo and I would be now! God be praised that he so orders it that there are still good souls in this world."

Ester, who had heard these words, sighed deeply. She alone knew what it had cost that there "might still be good souls in the world."

HIDALGUÍA

(CHIVALRY.)

ONE night in the month of July four horsemen, well mounted, emerged from an hacienda in Uruca* and rode hurriedly along the highway to the joining of the road to San Antonio de Belen, where they stopped.

"Here we must separate," said one of them. "May you have good luck, Ramon," he added, searching in the darkness for his friend's hand.

"Adios, Salvador, adios," replied the one spoken to, in a voice trembling with emotion. The two men, without letting go of each other's hands, drew together until their stirrups touched, and embraced warmly.

"Adios, adios"—"Good luck."

After a last embrace, long and affectionate, both started off in different directions, each escorted by one of the two horsemen who had just witnessed the sad scene of farewell. Those who followed the highroad did not get very far. At the Ciruelas river they fell into the hands of a picket of soldiers who carried them prisoners to the Cuartel of Alajuela. The other two fugitives, for fugitives they were,

*A district near San José.

kept on, with better fortune, along the San Antonio road.* The darkness did not permit them to see where they were going, so that the travellers had to trust to the instinct of their horses to avoid the bad places or to get out of them. Luckily it did not rain, which would have been one more hindrance to the rapid march that the critical situation in which Salvador Moreno found himself necessitated, for he was being eagerly searched for on account of his share in the attack made the night before on the Cuartel Principal† in San José. The revolutionary uprising had failed through the fault of those who were to have brought men from the neighboring towns, with the intention of arming them when the Cuartel had surrendered, and of laying siege to the other ones.

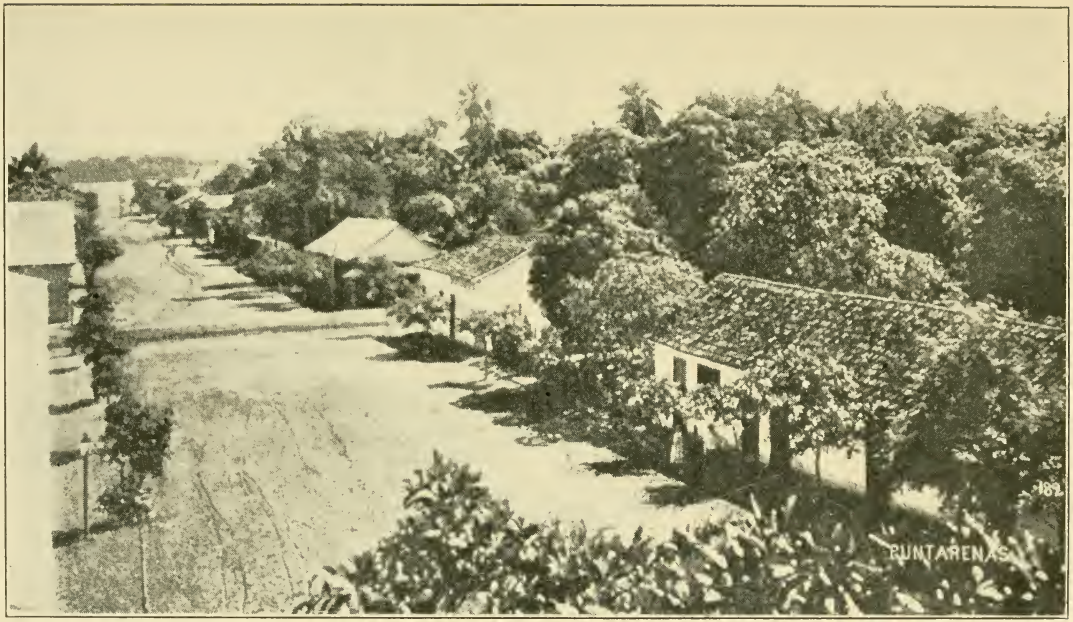
Not one of them appeared at the critical moment, and the few valiant ones who had surprised the garrison asleep at two o'clock in the morning, had to abandon at daybreak the conquest which had cost them so much blood.

Salvador did not answer the questions which from time to time his companion asked him. Absorbed in his thoughts he lived over again the happenings of last night's bloody drama; the meeting in the house of one of the conspirators, the irritating wait for those who did not come, the fear of a betrayal, the doubts and hestitations of the last hour, finally the moment of marching, the gate of the Cuartel

*This road which is little travelled, rejoins the main highway to Puntarenas near the Rio Grande.

†Headquarters barracks.

opened by the hand of a traitor, the hand to hand fight with the guard, the gallantry of the officers meeting death at their posts. But more than all there harassed him the vision of a young lieutenant running up hurriedly, sabre in hand, to aid his comrades, whom he had laid low by a shot at barely arm's length range. In vain he tried to make himself believe that it was a legitimate act of warfare. An internal voice cried out in the tribunal of his conscience against the blood that had been shed. Salvador Moreno was a high-strung, refined man to whom the brutality of force was repugnant. At the same time his indomitable and lofty spirit could not bend itself to the political despotism which is killing us like a shameful chronic sore. In the conspiracy he had seen the shaking off of the heavy yoke, the dignity of his country avenged, and the triumph of liberty. To gain all that, the sacrifice of his life had not seemed too much. Now his sorrow was very great, his patriotic illusions had disappeared like the visions of a beautiful dream when one awakens, and his heart was throbbing with wrath against those who through their cowardice had caused the daring attempt to fail. With keen regret he thought of his comrades uselessly sacrificed, of the agony of a brave young fellow whom he had carried out of the cuartel in his arms, mortally wounded. Clear and exact the events of the combat went marching through his mind, some



A BIT OF PUNTARENAS

of which were atrocious, worthy of savages, others irresistibly comical, like that of the boastful fellow who withdrew from the gate of the cuartel to go in search of his revolver which he pretended to have forgotten; and always, persistent and sad, the vision of the lieutenant falling without a cry, his hand at his breast. Afterwards the despair at the failure, the retreat at daybreak through the deserted streets of the capital, the interminable hours of anguish, hidden with Ramon Solares under some sacks in the country house of a friend, listening to the voices of those who were searching for them. Finally the sheltering night, the hurried flight, the gloomy future, forbidding as the wrath of the enraged dictator. In order to aid their escape the fugitives had agreed to follow different roads; Salvador Moreno chose the one to Puntarenas,* passing through San Antonio de Belen, and the plains of Carmen. Ramon Solares preferred the San Carlos† route, with the idea of seeking refuge in Nicaragua by land, where the two friends were to meet if Salvador should succeed in escaping the vigilance of the authorities of the port.

Both were accompanied by trusty retainers who knew the country and were of proved courage. It was Fate that decided in this case, and we have already seen that she declared in favor of Salvador Moreno, who with-

*The port on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica.
†A river in the northern part of Costa Rica flowing into the San Juan.

out meeting a soul, arrived at the highroad to Puntarenas at one o'clock in the morning, while his friend, chained in his prison, offered prayers that he might succeed in escaping from those who pursued him. At three o'clock he passed through Atenas and at six in the morning he and his companion arrived at the gates of San Mateo,* but now the horses could endure no more. It was part of the fugitive's plan to pass the day hidden in a friendly and secure house on the plains of Surubres, although now this was not possible, on account of the fatigue of the horses and the danger of the young conspirator's being recognized in passing through the village, in spite of the fact that he was wearing the costume of a countryman.† It was necessary then to decide on something.

"Don Salvador," said the guide, "three hundred yards from here there lives an acquaintance of mine, who is a man you can trust. If you like we can dismount there, so that we shan't have to pass through San Mateo in the daytime."

"Very well, let us go there."

The two men spurred their horses and a few minutes afterwards arrived at a house situated a short distance from the road. Through the unbarred gate they entered, saluted by the

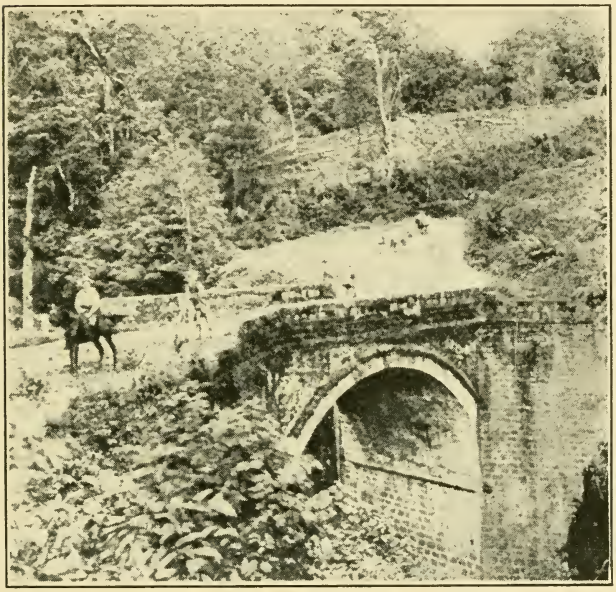
*Between Atenas and San Mateo the highroad crosses a range of mountains.

†In Costa Rica the country people wear a costume quite different from that of the upper class. The men wear short roundabout jackets and colored sashes about the waist to support the pantaloons.

barking of three thin, mangy dogs. At this disturbance an old and corpulent countryman came out on the veranda.

"Buenos dias, 'Ñor José," said the guide.

"Buenos dias, Pedro," replied the old man. "How goes it?"



ON THE OLD HIGHWAY TO PUNTARENAS

"Well; and how are you? How are the girls getting on?"

"Very well, thank you. Why don't you get off a while and rest?" added the old fellow.

The horsemen dismounted and Salvador

dropped, half dead with fatigue, on the settle that stood on the veranda. While he was stretching his aching legs, 'Ñor José and Pedro unsaddled the horses and the latter confided to the old man that his companion was fleeing the country. Hurriedly he told him a story which he made up as he went on; something about a quarrel in which machetes had been flourished in the air. The old man did not insist on the details, promising to keep quiet about the unlooked for guests in his house.

Pedro went to take the horses to the pasture and Salvador accepted with pleasure the coffee which the youngest daughter of 'Ñor José served him. The old man was proud of having for a son-in-law the jefe politico* of San Mateo, who had married his oldest daughter, a handsome girl, so people said. Noticing that his guest was getting sleepy he conducted him to a cot bed that he might rest.

Five minutes afterwards the fugitive was sleeping like a log. The night came on without Salvador's awakening from the deep slumber into which he had fallen, his bones aching and his nerves being unstrung by the fatigue and emotions he had endured.

Pedro had improved the time by bathing the horses in the neighboring river and giving them a good feed of corn. This task ended, he took a nap for a couple of hours, which was

*The chief official of a town in Spanish-America, similar to the office of mayor in the United States.

sufficient to restore to his muscles the necessary energy; and as it was now two o'clock in the afternoon, he shared the frugal dinner of his host.

On hearing the church bells of San Mateo tolling "Las Animas" he resolved to awaken Salvador, which was not an easy thing to do. For all that he shook him, it was impossible to overcome the stupor which held him fast. Finally he opened his eyes, looking about in a dazed way without comprehending, until Pedro's voice insisting on the urgency of taking the road made him remember the reality of the situation. Salvador got up with difficulty; each movement that he made aroused a dormant pain in his body, which was agitated by a painful, feverish sensation. A little glass of cognac produced the necessary reaction and the odor of supper already served began to remind him that he had been fasting for many hours.

While Salvador was devouring a chicken, which at Pedro's request the daughter of 'Ñor José had cooked, the latter, seated on a bench, observed him closely. Naturally keen, he had scented the fact that beneath the short jacket was hidden a person who was not accustomed to wear it. The attentiveness of Pedro to Salvador, the respect with which he talked to him, were indications that this man belonged to a higher class of society than his garb would imply. This was evident; but looking

well at the matter, what difference did it make to him that the stranger was who he was? A five dollar bill which Salvador put in his hand, completely confirmed the old man's suspicions. In a little while Pedro entered to give notice that the horses were ready and Salvador, in bidding farewell, warmly squeezed the hand of his chance host, who almost fell over himself in his salutations and wishes for a safe journey. They were already going out to the veranda, when a boy came running up with the news that 'Ñor José's oldest daughter was very ill. About to give birth to a child she had suffered a fall with bad consequences.

The old man was very much alarmed and Salvador tried to calm him, advising him to call a doctor.

"We have no doctor here," replied 'Ñor José, much distressed, "and while one is coming from Alajuela the girl may die."

Salvador, who was a warm-hearted fellow, did not hesitate a moment.

"Let us go and see her," he said. "I am a doctor."

The old man, surprised and pleased, did not know what to say.

"May God pay you, señor, may God pay you!" he finally murmured with tears in his eyes. Pedro, plainly anxious, improved the moment when the countryman went to get his hat and call his daughter, to whisper in Salvador's ear that the sick woman was no less

than the wife of the jefe politico, who must already have had orders to capture him.

"No matter, Pedro. It is my duty not to allow this poor woman to die. Let us go at once."

The old man, who returned hurriedly, heard these last words. "May God pay you, señor," he said again in a low voice. Pedro took the old man behind him on the crupper and Salvador the girl. After fifteen minutes of fast riding, the four stopped in front of the jefe politico's office.

The house was full of gossipers of the neighborhood, who had come in armed with infallible remedies which they were anxious to apply to the sufferer. The friends of the jefe politico gathered together in the dining-room about a bottle of white rum, told discreetly, for the comfort of the official, of similar cases which finally had ended happily.

The arrival of her father and sister called forth a groan from the sick one, who in her rôle of a first-time mother considered herself as good as dead.

"Enter, enter, doctor!" exclaimed the old man, politely addressing the fugitive, whom nobody in the midst of the general confusion had as yet noticed. Judging by his costume, those present took him for one of those country quacks who live on the ignorance and avarice of the country people. Salvador examined the sick woman carefully and was convinced that,

although the case was a serious one, it would not be difficult to save her. Without loss of time he took such measures as the circumstances demanded, and from that moment he thought only of the life of the little human creature which depended on his care. In vain Pedro reminded him many times of the great peril he was incurring in that house; nothing could make him withdraw.

'Ñor José and the jefe politico, feeling more at ease after hearing the doctor's opinion, went to join the circle of friends, who had already given a good account of the first bottle of rum. When the second was opened, tongues began to get loosened, and the conversation acquired an animation which it lacked at the beginning.

Incidentally they talked of the revolution which had just taken place and 'Ñor José, who, on account of the isolation in which he lived, was ignorant of it all, made them tell him of what had happened, listening to the story with anxiety. On learning that it was the Cuartel Principal which had been attacked, he asked his son-in-law whether he had news of Rafael, his son, who was one of the garrison.

"I don't know anything about him," replied the jefe politico. "I suppose that there is no news since they have not sent me any word. Nevertheless in order to feel easy I am going to telegraph to San José."

When the despatch was written it was sent to the telegraph office.

Salvador did not leave his patient, encouraging her with cheering words to bear her pains with fortitude. Pedro, ill at ease, was watching the street, near the horses which were dozing with their heads low down.

At ten o'clock at night a long telegram came for the jefe politico. As he was reading it his hands trembled slightly. Suddenly a violent exclamation broke from his lips.

On hearing it, the people present got up as though to ask the cause, but the jefe politico without speaking a word conducted his father-in-law to a neighboring room. There, without any preamble, he told him that his son had been killed in the attack of the night before, and that Doctor Salvador Moreno was supposed to have been his slayer, and that he was then trying to escape from the country.

The poor old man, falling limp into a chair, wept bitterly over the death of his son. After a while he aroused himself with an expression of unspeakable wrath and the tears dried up in his eyes, which now shone like red-hot coals. "Salvador Moreno," he murmured in a hoarse voice, "I won't forget that name."

"I have heard it," said the jefe politico. "I believe it is that of a young doctor recently come back from Europe."

One of the women neighbors interrupted the conversation with the glad news of the birth of a strong and healthy man-child. Both were going in to see it, but it was not yet time for them to enter.

Pedro, always uneasy, had hardly heard the news when he went in search of 'Ñor José to ask him to remind his companion of the urgency of starting.

"Tell Don Salvador that it is already very late and that I am waiting for him," he said forgetting to use the assumed name. On hearing this name the old man became petrified. Then he exclaimed with fury,

"Don Salvador! Don Salvador Moreno! That is the doctor's name, isn't it so?"

"Yes. Did he tell you?"

Without replying, 'Ñor José went to a corner of the room where a machete was leaning against the wall. He drew it from its scabbard and with an expression of unheard-of ferocity, went toward the apartment of his daughter.

At that moment the door opened. Upon the bed lay the mother, very pale, but her eyes and lips were smiling. With his sleeves rolled up and absorbed in his task, Salvador was bathing the new born child in a wash basin. On seeing this the angry father felt a surge of generous feeling invade his heart. That man was the slayer of his Rafael; that was the terrible truth; but that same man who had shed the blood of his son had just saved another bit of his soul at the risk of his liberty and perhaps of his very life. He stood looking at the peaceful scene; the happy mother, the anxious and busy neighbors, and the doc-

tor, very earnest, coddling the child, whose cries seemed to ask pardon for the saviour of its mother.

The old man drew back slowly, letting go of the machete. After a moment of hesitation, he passed his rough hand across his face and drawing near to the fugitive said in a hoarse and trembling voice,

"Don Salvador, I beg you to go soon, because you are in great danger in this house."

LA BOTIJA

(THE BURIED TREASURE.)

DURING forty-five years of labor and privations, 'Ñor Ciriaco Badilla had amassed a fortune, the value of which he himself did not know, but which according to appearances was of more than ordinary size. He was known to have much real property, coffee plantations, pastures, lands sown with various crops, many cattle; and it was known that he always had considerable money on deposit in the bank, in addition to the gold, which according to common report he kept carefully buried. He was also in the habit of lending money upon mortgages, with two sureties, and for the moderate interest of two per cent a month.

'Ñor Ciriaco was a model for peasants. Out of bed before sunrise, he went to his rude tasks with untiring patience, until night in summer, or the rain in winter* compelled him to a rest rarely taken with pleasure.

From a little child he had lived this bovine existence, with the single desire of acquiring wealth, and it can be positively stated that

*In Costa Rica the dry season is called summer, and the rainy season winter. During the latter, the rain usually commences at about two in the afternoon.

during half a century of his life he had had no other pleasure than that of having and not spending, a rare pleasure which only misers know how to appreciate. Although rich he lived like a beggar, want reigned in his house and the evil tongues even said that when 'Ñor Ciriaco went to places where he was not known he begged for public charity with a pitiful voice. This was not at all improbable, because he was not the man to recoil at the opportunity to pocket a five-cent piece. Moreover, his body, emaciated by so many unsatisfied cravings, and his unkempt aspect, were calculated to excite compassion. He could be seen in most lamentable attire, riding about the country, spurring pitilessly a consumptive mare and mounted on a saddle of the time of the conquest, with the calves of his legs bare and his pantaloons rolled up to save them from the friction of the stirrup leathers. And when any one, surprised, asked him the reason for such a strange manner of riding, he would reply sententiously: "Because the skin gets well and the cloth doesn't." This was one of his favorite aphorisms, which rivalled that other, also his,—"It is better to have a full pocket than a full stomach."

Nevertheless, no matter how great the repellent avarice of 'Ñor Ciriaco might be, compared with that of his wife it might almost be called generosity. To tell of the prodigies of parsimony which she daily accomplished is

little less than impossible for one who is ignorant of the science of depriving one's self of the most necessary things when he has them in abundance. She sold the milk of the cows, the eggs of the hens, the young chickens, the garden stuff, the fruits, everything there was in the house even to the plantains, the foundation of the most frugal fare of the family. Still as after all it was necessary to eat something, 'Ñor Ciriaco, with that scant respect with which the property of those who live in the cities, those detested frock coat people, inspires the country folk, took upon himself the easing of plantain trees of their fruit in a neighboring hacienda, which belonged to some rich gentleman. Nor were his pilferings limited to this alone; he used often to return proudly with his saddle bags full of aguacates,* mangos and anonas,† which he appropriated without any remorse ever troubling the Octavian peace of his conscience,—quite the contrary, since "to rob a rich man is to take away his troubles," and for the countryman every one that wears a frock coat is rich.

Such great miserliness had, however, one exception. The wife of 'Ñor Ciriaco showed herself very lavish in one respect, and that was in the numerous progeny she bore him. This abundance of little brats, however, did not displease the miser; he looked rather on the birth of each new son with a satisfaction al-

*Alligator pears.
†Custard apples.

most equal to that which the birth of a calf or any other profitable animal gave him. The little ones were hardly able to walk when he put them to sweat over a thousand tasks beyond their strength, and began to train them in his customary pilferings. This was not difficult considering the admirable disposition which his disciples showed, who could soon give their teacher points in the rustic arts of making an opening in a neighbor's fence or purloining some succulent fruit. All of them gave promise of being worthy scions of the thrifty family of the Badillas, forming an exception to the proverb which says: "After a frugal father comes a spendthrift son."

The existence of 'Ñor Ciriaco and his family differed little from that of the animals about them. They had no dealings or friendships with anybody, because these in the long run cause responsibilities, and these they were always careful to avoid. In their metallic hearts there was no room for any human sentiment but the lust for gold and the most supreme selfishness. Thus they lived isolated like pariahs, and loathed by everybody.

A sad happening interrupted the dreary monotony of the miserable life of the misers. The mother died in three days, of a singular and acute malady. The avaricious man felt the loss of his wife in the only way that he could feel it, that is, from the utilitarian point of view. He wept bitterly over her, just as he

would have done if his famous yoke of yellow oxen which were worth fifteen onzas* had died; and when he began to meditate on the difficulty of replacing her his grief was even greater, because women like the deceased were not to be found in cartloads.

He had been clearly aware of that when he picked her out, with that trained glance which had never deceived him in the selection of a strong and healthy animal. For all that she was so ugly and, according to gossip, of doubtful morals, he preferred her to others who were handsomer because they did not have the strength of limbs or arms nor that inextinguishable ardor for work which aroused for her the admiration of the miser; for there never was a task no matter how hard which could terrify her; she was what one might call a veritable beast of burden. To complete her perfections she had a constitution of iron; but when she finally fell sick, for the first time in the thirty years of her married life, it was fatal. One day she could not get up, overcome at the very beginning by the violence of her sickness. On seeing her in such an alarming condition, her youngest daughter, pitying her, proposed calling a doctor, but the sick woman was the first to protest against such an extravagance. "He will charge too much, it is better to call in 'Ña Pastora."

'Ña Pastora came, a species of country quack

*A gold coin of Costa Rica, now little used, worth about seventeen colones, or eight dollars in American gold.

and sometimes a witch, who diagnosed the case as spasms in the veins, a mortal sickness, it would seem.

. . . . . .

After the deceased was buried and the regular nine days of mourning, which was all that one could expect from such a niggardly family, were passed, and when the priest had been paid for the masses of San Gregorio, with much pain to 'Ñor Ciriaco who found this passport to heaven very costly, things returned to their normal condition and continued so for some months. But suddenly, almost in a night, there came an extraordinary change in the miser. His family began to note with surprise that now he did not roll up his pantaloons when he rode horseback, and their surprise changed to amazement when they saw him return one afternoon with a bundle of new clothes. The week following, 'Ñor Ciriaco completely scandalized his family by buying a fine Panama hat and a silk sash; yet even this was nothing compared to the purchase of a sorrel horse and a new saddle, which capped the climax of the indignation seething in the souls of the Badilla heirs on seeing how the extravagance of their father was growing. Such a singular change in the habits of 'Ñor Ciriaco had to have a cause, and in fact there was one. A sagacious observer could have

noticed a strange coincidence between the metamorphosis of the miser and the arrival in the village of a pretty and lively girl named Filomena. She was a resident of the place, although she had passed three years in the city as a servant. Now she had returned, very lively and quick witted, armed with a repertoire of those vulgar and stupid sayings which are current in barracks, barber shops and factories.

When Filomena went out for an airing in the village, dressed in her best finery, and looking very bewitching, the whole neighborhood was quite stirred up. The men, incited by her free and easy manner, called after her as she passed, rustic bits of gallantry. The women, in contrast, looked at her aggressively, calling her between their teeth a vagabond and a street walker. Conjugal disturbances caused by the coquettish eyes of the girl were not long in coming, and the busy-bodies were already talking of having the priest interfere in the matter, when the news burst on them like a bomb-shell that 'Ñor Ciriaco Badilla had an understanding with her. At first nobody wished to give ear to such startling news; when, however, the miser appeared, transformed into a gallant, shaved, clean, and even seemingly younger, they could not but admit the truth of the report, especially as there were those who affirmed that they had seen him come out of Filomena's house quite late. When

the news was confirmed, 'Ñor Ciriaco soon became a choice morsel for the gossips, and nicknames were showered upon him; but if most people were satisfied with ridiculing and laughing at his tardy extravagances, his nine heirs were as angry as hornets and almost burst their heads in seeking some means of making the enamoured old man regain his senses.

One of them, who was quick of mind, hit upon the idea that their father must be bewitched, because only on this ground could one conceive of a person of his age and character indulging in such follies. This was a ray of light. The thing was plain; what else could it be? 'Ñor Ciriaco was under the power of a spell prepared by Filomena, and accordingly it was necessary to nullify the harmful influence as soon as possible. To effect this, the wiseacre of the family had an interview with 'Ña Pastora, who speedily confirmed the supposition of enchantment, and prescribed for it some yellow powders to be mixed in the coffee of the bewitched man little by little, while at the same time they were to take the precaution of saying the Lord's Prayer backwards. That very afternoon, 'Ñor Ciriaco took the potion. The remedy could not, however, have been efficacious, for the old man became more enamoured than ever of his charming Filomena. Nevertheless, 'Ña Pastora was too wise to admit herself beaten at the very start. She had solemnly promised to break the spell,

and as she was well provided with wiles and tricks, in her equipment as a witch, she returned to the charge with increased spirit. Drawing each of them out skilfully, she soon learned the character and habits of 'Ñor Ciriaco. Among other peculiarities, she learned that he was very timid and believed literally in the Cadejos,* the Cegua,† the Llorona,‡ and other popular superstitions; but that the hermanos** especially caused him unspeakable terror. With this data it was very easy for the old woman to evolve a plan, the execution of which the same wiseacre of the family, whose name was Isidoro, took charge. He had observed that his father, when he returned at night from the house of Filomena, came across a neighboring pasture in which was a guava tree by the foot of which the path ran. There was no better place in which to hide and give the old man a scare. Isidoro listened attentively to the detailed instructions of the old woman, and received with some misgivings a jicara, or tree gourd, one of those used to beat chocolate in, which she delivered to him with strange incantations.

As soon as nine o'clock sounded on the

*(Author's notes.) A fantastic animal in the form of a huge dog, black and hairy, with resounding hoofs.

†A monster that takes on the form of a beautiful woman, to lead men away.

‡A dreadful phantom that can be heard moaning in the most terrifying manner, in the mountains.

**Souls in distress. (Translator's note:) The translator once read this story to some native boatman on the Pacific Coast and asked them about these creatures. They at once gave a detailed account of their habits and appearance. One sailor stated that the Cadejos was probably the most dangerous animal in Costa Rica.

clock of the village church he went to the pasture and climbing the guava tree settled himself to await the return of his father. There was a moon that night, but the sky was covered with clouds and the pale, faint light of the luminary gave to the outline of things a mysterious vagueness more fear-inspiring even than absolute darkness. Isidoro waited for the old man to pass. To tell the truth, he did not feel quite at ease himself and the time of waiting seemed dreadfully long, because all the fables and gruesome legends of which, as a rule, rustic heads are full, began to bestir themselves threateningly in his mind. He heard with dread the church clock strike half past nine, ten, half past ten. A little while after the last stroke a vague form seemed to be moving in the shadows and his heart beat violently. A moment later there was no doubt about it. Some one was approaching with rapid steps and a nervous manner. Isidoro clutched the jicara. The man came abreast of the guava tree and hurriedly kept on his way. At that instant a hollow and terrifying voice came from the leafy top of the tree:

"Ciriaco—o—o!"

The wayfarer stopped and looked all about in a great fright.

"Ciriaco—o—o!" said the dreadful voice again. The old man, almost fainting with terror, did not wait longer, but took to his heels in panic-stricken flight, convinced that it was

his wife who was calling him, to reprove him for his bad conduct.

. . . . . .

The stratagem devised by 'Ña Pastora had an admirable effect. From the unfortunate night in which he heard the voice from beyond the grave, the nocturnal excursions of the old man ceased. He now kept himself behind barred doors as soon as it became dark, almost dead with superstitious fears. So great was the terror which the memory of his dreadful adventure cause him, that he ordered, of his own free will, a number of masses to be said for the deceased to appease her justly angered soul; yet his love for Filomena had entered into his flesh and in vain he strove to banish her seductive image from his memory. The tyrannical passion had taken possession of his being, a senile passion, irresistible and selfish, which enslaved both his body and his soul. Inspirited by its constant spurrings, he vowed to himself every day to return to the side of his adored one, but the shades of night always banished his valiant resolves, which gave place to fear, a terrible fear that made him tremble like a hare. Perhaps love would have been beaten at last in the struggle if the miser had not seen Filomena one Sunday as he came out from Mass. The girl looked at him with a significant sadness, and even made a gesture as though wiping away a tear. 'Ñor Ciriaco

could not resist this, and straightway followed her to her house. A week later he went to live with Filomena in the neighboring city, to the great scandal of the whole village.

For the second time 'Ña Pastora lost in the game which she was playing, for the miser was more bewitched than ever. The wrath of the heirs broke forth terribly, because of the flight of their father, and was increased when they heard that he was squandering their prospective fortune, not only with the young woman but also with certain friends who were teaching him to frequent wine shops. On investigation, this report proved to be true, with the additional aggravation that the said friends were a pair of sharpers who had conspired with Filomena to exploit 'Ñor Ciriaco, and who, for this purpose, had woven a woof of deception worthy of the cunning of 'Ña Pastora.

Informed by the girl of the timidity of the old man, the two cronies, one of whom was addicted to bottles and the other to petticoats, conceived a plan for satisfying each one his heart's desire at 'Ñor Ciriaco's expense.

With much skill, they commenced to instill in him the belief that in the patio* of the house there was a botija,† which did not fail to arouse the ever present greed of the miser. When they saw that his mind was now well

*Courtyard of a Spanish-American house.

†(Author's note.) In Costa Rica we call buried treasures "Botijas," on account of the earthen jars, of that name, in which they used to be buried.

prepared, Filomena awoke him one night with feigned anxiety, telling him that she had heard groanings in the patio. Every hair on 'Ñor Ciriaco's body stood on end; from that instant he could not sleep and began to say *Ave Marias* and the Lord's Prayer one after the other.

On the following night the good friend who was so fond of bottles arrived early and of course nothing was talked of but botijas and hermanos.‡ A doleful moan suddenly interrupted the gabble of the tippler. The old man began to tremble. Ten minutes later another moan was heard, and so on with an equal interval between until they had heard four. The terror of 'Ñor Ciriaco was indescribable; the rascal, very calm, comforted him and told him that it would be necessary to talk with the soul in distress in order to learn where the botija was; Filomena, who assured them that the groans proceeded from the chayote vine, which was in the patio, ran and got into bed. A little while afterward, the friend arose to take his leave, but 'Ñor Ciriaco, half wild with terror, grasped him by one arm and begged him not to leave him alone in such a dreadful plight. The tippler consented to remain on condition that some little bottles of cognac be brought to aid him in fighting off slumber.

This farce which brought felicity to the

‡Souls in distress. In Costa Rica, the country people believe that if a man dies leaving money buried and owes any one, his ghost, in great distress, will haunt that place until it is discovered and the debts paid.

knaves and the young woman lasted for more than a month. Night after night, thanks to the cowardliness of 'Ñor Ciriaco, the comedy was repeated, with as good success as on the first. Filomena took charge of secretly getting the other friend into the house. He would hide himself in the chayote vine, where it is not probable the girl would leave him to pass the whole night alone. Things might have continued thus for a long time if the two cronies had not been so imprudent as to confide the secret to various friends of the same ilk. These found the story very amusing, and therefore it was soon common talk in all the wine-shops of the city. Thus it is plain how the matter came to the ears of Isidoro Badilla one market day, although the tale-bearer was ignorant of the fact that the person mentioned was the young man's father, for he managed to conceal it. On his return to the village he informed 'Ña Pastora of the state of affairs. The old woman, after meditating a while, told him not to worry, promising that this time everything should be arranged as he desired.

Filomena, in order to put an end to the super-natural persecutions, of which 'Ñor Ciriaco was the victim, had promised to attend the Pasada* of the Virgin of the Angels, dressed as an Indian girl, and as the old man built up

*(Author's note.) An annual religious ceremony, which takes place in the city of Cartago, is known by this name of "La Pasada," and consists of the translation of the miraculous image of Our Lady of the Angels from the church of La Soledad to the sanctuary of its name, with a great following of pilgrims, devout persons, curious ones and masqueraders.

great hopes on the intervention of the negrita† in his favor, he opened his purse wide to pay for the costume. The two sharpers, without whom nothing was now done in the house, were invited to the pilgrimage, and all four set out for Cartago, on the evening before the ceremony. That same night, a spying neighbor could have seen an old woman accompanied by a young man, entering the house of 'Ñor Ciriaco, it might have been with a skeleton key, for they were some time in opening the door. The old woman, who was carrying an earthenware jar on her hip, came out alone at the end of an hour, and carefully closed the door.

When the pilgrims returned on the following night, rather tipsy and very merry, Filomena, who had outshone many in the procession, proposed crowning the festival with a good supper which could be brought from a Chinese restaurant near by.

'Ñor Ciriaco, whose generosity now had no limits, having accepted this proposal, went out with the two cronies into the street, while the girl set the table.

They did not delay long in returning with the supper and a number of bottles, when the love feast commenced, which promised to be long on account of the keen appetites of the banqueters, and merry, thanks to the good-humor all were in.

†(Author's note.) Little negress. An affectionate name that the people of Cartago give to the miraculous image of Our Lady of the Angels.

'Ñor Ciriaco, full of confidence in the efficacy of the vow made by Filomena, gorged himself to repletion. Suddenly with a look of anguish he ceased to eat.

"The moans,"—he murmured, growing pale.

"You're crazy," replied one of the two friends, casting a roguish glance at Filomena.

There was silence for a while. Another groan, clearly audible, which sounded in the patio, made them all arise from the table panic-stricken. The three accomplices looked at each other in astonishment. The friend of Filomena, doubtless more courageous or more familiar with these mysteries of the other world, went to a window which opened on the patio and raised it. The others grouped themselves behind him.

"A—a—a—a—y!" wailed the "hermano," for the third time, with a mournful accent.

All began to tremble with fear. 'Ñor Ciriaco's teeth were chattering, and his knees were doubling under him. The situation was terrible. After some minutes, which to those present seemed centuries, the brave one asked in a faint and faltering voice:

"If—if—you are a soul in distress—tell us wha—what you want."

"To escape from my sorro—o—ws," replied the voice.

The four friends laid hold of each other, so

as not to fall. The same one who had spoken first, again asked:

"Tell us fo—for—wha—what you are doing penance."

"For a botija—a—a!"

"Wh—where is it?"

"He—ere."

The voice came from the chayote vine, so of course the botija was beneath it, but who was daring enough to go and get it out at such a time? Nevertheless, the powerful incentive of gold began little by little to overcome the fear in those human hearts. Trembling and whispering, the woman and the three men decided to go and search for a pick and shovel in the neighborhood, and as no one had the courage to wait there alone, all four went leaving the house empty. They had scarcely gone out, when Isidoro—for the "hermano" was he and no one else—improved the opportunity to slip out also.

They did not delay long in securing the necessary implements for digging, and 'Ñor Ciriaco, calmed by the presence of four or five frequenters of the neighboring wine-shop who had come behind them, commenced to insinuate timidly that the botija belonged to him exclusively, as he was the owner of the house. The others, impatient to discover the gold, began to dig beneath the chayote vine by the light of a lantern. One of them noticed that the earth came out easily as though it had

been recently dug up, but at that moment none of those present was in a mood to observe closely.

"There's something here," exclaimed one of those who were working at the hole.

Everybody came closer, panting with excitement. Two minutes later an earthenware jar of ordinary size could be seen, which made the hearts of all palpitate with covetous desire. The vessel, which was quite heavy, was taken out. Then 'Ñor Ciriaco claimed and obtained for himself the right of examining the contents. With a trembling hand he removed a stone that closed the mouth of the jar and greedily thrust his fingers inside. Again he pulled out a stone, and then another, and another, until he had taken out ten. A great disenchantment succeeded to the first excitement of the spectators of that strange scene, since the coveted riches, which they hoped to find in the jar, did not make their appearance. Those who had come from the wine-shop began to suspect that they were victims of some new prank of the two rascally friends, when 'Ñor Ciriaco drew out from the bottom of the jar two objects, whose appearance was received with a boisterous laugh. They were a bottle of brandy and a handsome cow's horn.*

The miser stood stupefied with amazement, looking first at one and then another, without comprehending the cause of that unexpected

*The Spanish word cuerno, or horn, is often applied to a cuckold.

hilarity. Suddenly a bright ray of light penetrated his mind, and the veil that had covered his eyes fell. Wrath, a terrible savage wrath, surged into his heart. He looked for Filomena, and advancing toward her with a menacing air, shouted:

"Oh, you *cheat!!*" and heaped curses and vile names upon her.

As the girl's lover made as though he would interpose, 'Ñor Ciriaco split his head open with a bottle.

EL AHORCADO

(THE HANGED MAN.)

WE had already passed the smiling valley of Ujarraz after traversing the red and sterile lands of misnamed Paraiso;* behind lay the pastures of Cartago, dotted with huge gray stones, and the green coffee plantations of Tres Rios. The train rolled now over the colossal viaduct the Birris† with the roaring noise of torrential waters, and kept on its downward course winding about like a snake high up on the side of the mountain range.

The panorama had changed with the rapidity of a stage scene. To the sparse vegetation of the high altitudes which reminds one of northern landscapes, succeeded the monstrous luxuriance of the tropical forests; where the great size of the trees, the density of the foliage, and the tall and graceful palm trees here and there gave one the strange illusion of being in another country, a thousand leagues away.

At the caprice of the interminable turnings and twistings of the railroad line which

*Paradise.
†The largest bridge on the railroad from Limon to San José, nearly 300 feet high.

follows the cañon of the Reventazon river, the aspect of the landscape changed continually. At times we could descry the river boiling impetuously along in the depths far below, where the vertical rays of the mid-day sun penetrated, making it shine like a silver ribbon against a background of emeralds. Two minutes later we were surrounded by the silent majesty of the mountains which shut in the horizon like a gigantic amphitheatre, or passed by some mysterious abyss which yawned threateningly at our feet. My companion in the seat, who noticed the admiration which the picturesque panorama caused me, suspended the reading of his paper to say:

"If our grandfathers could rise up from their tombs and see the ease with which to-day we go to the Atlantic coast, they would fall dead again of surprise. They used to confess and make their wills when they went to Matina,* to the famous Matina which inspires fear in men and madness in mules,† as they used to say in those days, when men were braver and mules better. The truth is that this road seems like a work of the Romans, and many believed it an impossibility until it was done. I remember that a person of importance, one of those who believe themselves infallible, once said in a mocking tone: 'Gen-

*A village on the coast plain near Limon.

†In Spanish this saying rhymes:

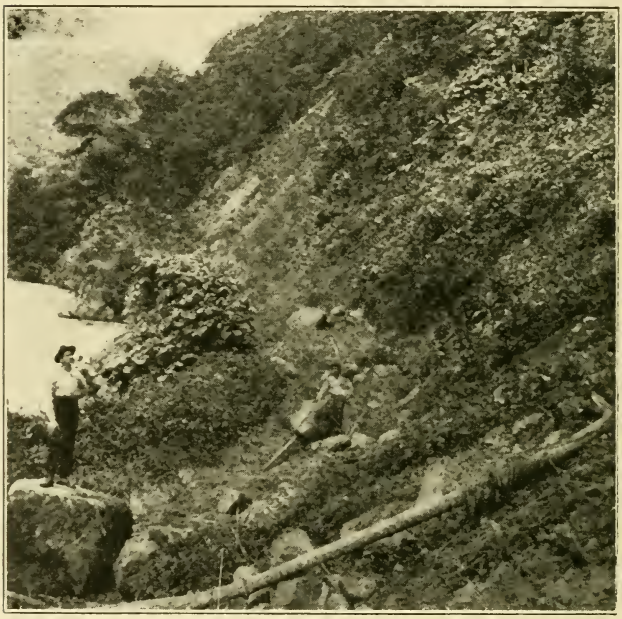
"Al famoso Matina
que a los hombres acoquina
y a las mulas desatina."

eral Guardia* is trying to build a railroad to Port Limon, where the birds themselves can scarcely go with wings.' To-day one might answer him that if the birds cannot get there by flying there is nothing to prevent them from making the journey very comfortably in a cage. But one must confess that those who doubted the successful outcome of the work were not without reason. Believe me, that only we who have seen near at hand the difficulties that had to be conquered in finishing it can appreciate their magnitude."

Then my neighbor, who was talkative, began to tell me many tales connected with the construction of our railroad to the east in which the name of Keith, the indefatigable North American, to whose prodigious force and indomitable energy the completion of that undertaking is chiefly owed, was often mentioned. All of those histories are very interesting, and could serve as examples worthy of imitation by future generations, who cannot but admire what was done by force of perseverance, energy and toil, fighting hand to hand with inanimate things and the elements combined against man. Perhaps some day there will be one who will tell of the heroic deeds of these humble laborers, many of whom perished obscurely, victims of the deadly climate, the constant battle against the terrible ruggedness of the mountains; the ravages of the rivers

*A dictator of Costa Rica during whose rule this road was commenced.

which at any moment overleaped their beds and swept away and twisted out of shape great iron bridges as if they had been of straw; the unheard of fatigues of those who had to work



A SLIDE ON THE COSTA RICA RAILWAY

under an overpowering sun, breathing unhealthy miasmas, badly fed and passing the nights upon the ground soaked by heavy rains, without being able to sleep, harassed by clouds of ferocious mosquitoes. This is a subject worthy of a great epic, and perhaps some poet

of the future will write it, when the ideals and sentiments of men may have changed and they prefer the tales of the noble struggles of industry, to the bloody annals of the great captains. While that time is coming, though in my opinion still far off, I am going to relate the last of the episodes which my companion on the train told me and which seemed to have made a deep impression on his mind.

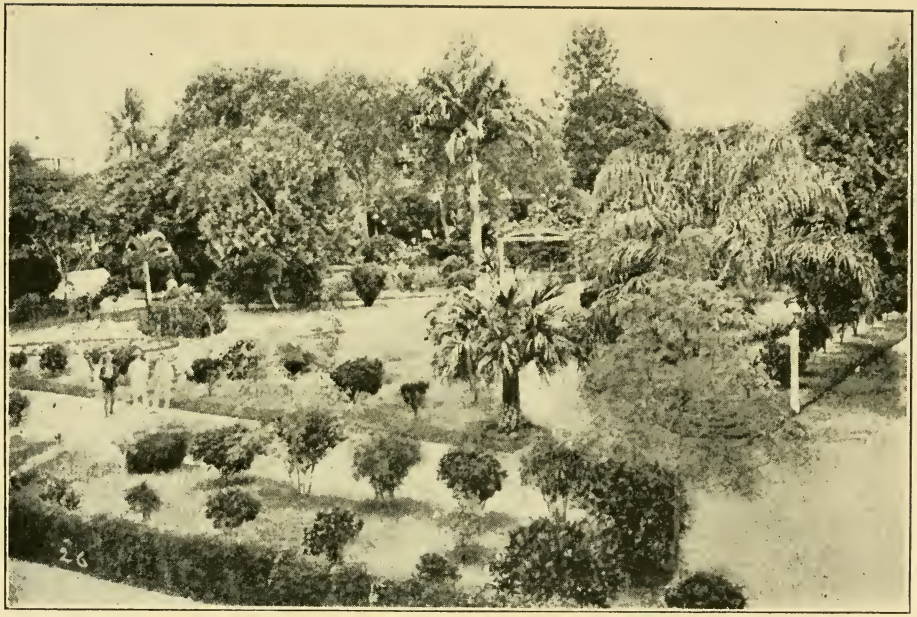
. . . . . .

When the work on the railroad was commenced, the port of Limon was almost a wilderness, where only a few miserable thatched huts, inhabited by negroes, could be seen, aside from the temporary structures erected by the government for the necessities of the public service. It is unnecessary to say that life there was very hard at that time, since every comfort was lacking, on account of the impossibility of communicating with the interior of of the country and on account of the slight maritime activity, confined to a monthly steamer of the British Royal Mail, the arrival of which was a feast day. On these occasions, one could get ice, which was the most needed thing in that fiery climate. There were no diversions nor even time to read. Sundays they used to go hunting and return with wild turkeys and other game, which were a godsend to people condemned to live on canned provisions. The Governor's negro cook took

charge of preparing what the hunters provided, and brought forth bottles of wine, thus improvising a banquet, in which Doctor Urbina led the conversation with his inexhaustible repertoire of stories and jokes.

Doctor Urbina was a rare type, a mixture of cynicism and good-heartedness; of a short temper, and consequently a rather difficult person to deal with, although he was most commonly found in a very affable humor. When, however, he appeared with a certain furrow between his eyebrows and with a sparkle in his left eye, it was better to abstain from talking to him, so as to avoid injury to one's feelings. At such times he could give voice only to sarcasms and cutting ironies, which even his best friends could not pardon and which caused him many hatreds and hard feelings during his life. Nevertheless the politeness of his ordinary manner and the wittiness of his conversation kept at his side a group of persons who, if they did not actually like him, at least took pleasure in hearing him talk with the keen wit which was natural to him. As for the rest he was an excellent doctor and an energetic man, resolute and of a ready invention, as he proved on various occasions, especially on one which has become famous.

Coolies had been brought from China for the railroad work and were located in the unhealthy zone, as it is well known that the life



THE PARK IN PORT LIMON

of a Chinaman is of no great importance. One must suppose that they themselves held the same opinion, considering the ease with which they parted from it. In fact not a day dawned that some son of the Celestial Empire was not found hanging from a tree, to the envy of his companions, who literally believed that he would come to life on the banks of the Hoang Ho, the famous Yellow River, and find happiness in the contemplation of the fragile pagodas of the land of Confucius, far from the abhored overseer who made them work.

This mania for suicide, of which homesickness and laziness were the chief causes, began to take on alarming proportions among the coolies, and it was necessary to consider seriously some way of stopping it. Although, with this object, various experiments were tried, none were of any use. Neither threats nor promises could restrain the evil. A very ingenious idea then occurred to Doctor Urbina, which had an admirable result. One day when two Chinamen were found hanging, in spite of the strict vigilance exercised in the camp to prevent such happenings, the order was given to call them all together and form them in a circle. Stretched on the ground in the centre were placed the two suicides. Then the doctor, grave and solemn, appeared and taking a scalpel out of his instrument case quickly cut off the ears and the cues from the corpses, in the presence of the horrified coolies. Then by

means of an interpreter, he announced to them that every one who after that should take his life would suffer the same mutilations, and that in this unsightly, imperfect state he would come back to life in China. That was an efficacious remedy. Not another coolie com-

ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF RAILROADING IN THE TROPICS

mitted suicide; and when the doctor used to relate this anecdote he never forgot to conclude in his deep bass voice: "Even the Chinamen have their little bit of vanity."

My neighbor made other like digressions in telling what I am now going to relate, but in

order not be diffuse, I consider it better to omit them.

It happened that two Jamacian negroes came to Limon in a boat from the small Colombian town of Bocas del Toro. They announced themselves as artists or minstrels, and made known their desire of giving a performance, for which purpose a freight shed was lent to them, where a stage was constructed. The programme was divided into two parts. The first consisted of songs and dances; in the second, one of the actors was to simulate the death of a man by hanging. From the Governor down, there was not an inhabitant of the place who did not go to the performance. Two large kerosene torches placed at the door of the shed illuminated a placard printed in English on which it was stated, of course that those negroes were the "Champions of the World." The first part furnished great amusement for the North Americans present, who cannot see a negro on the stage without almost dying of laughter. The rest of the spectators, who did not understand English or did not see the point of the jokes, would have had a dull time of it that night had it not been for the witty comments in a jocular vein which Doctor Urbina made in a loud voice.

After a rather long intermission, the second part commenced. Suspended from a beam over the platform or stage the hangman's noose could be seen. The two negroes appeared and

one of them tied the other's hands. This done, both got upon a bench and the one who acted the part of hangman placed the noose of the rope about the neck of his companion. When everything was ready the negro executioner pronounced a discourse which must have been very funny, to judge from the laughter of the Yankees; then after getting down he snatched away the bench, leaving the condemned man hanging in the air. There was a creaking of the beam and the body was swaying in space. The scene was repugnant, and became even more so when the negro was seen to struggle, his face swollen and his eyes bulging from their sockets. A tremor of horror ran through the crowd.

"That man is strangling!" exclaimed Doctor Urbina.

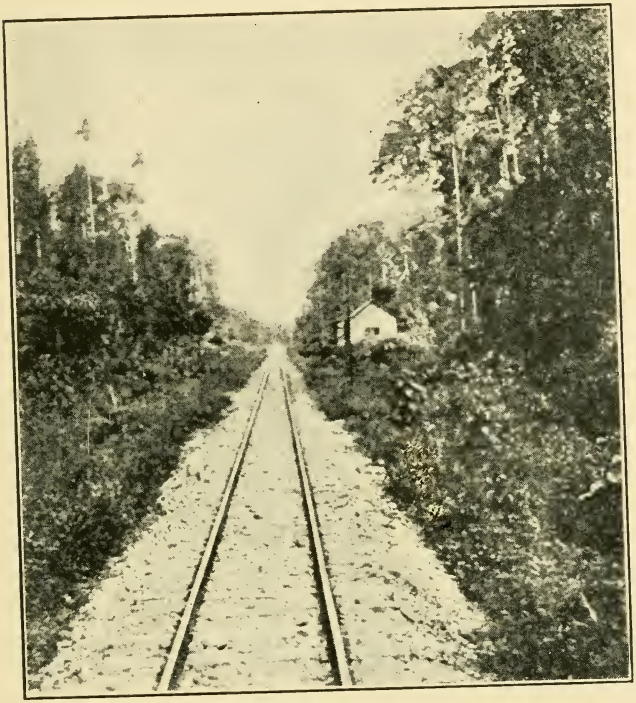
The negro who played the part of hangman replied, laughing, "Oh, my friend does this hanging act very well."

These words called forth a shout of laughter from everybody, and all looked at the doctor, believing that this was one of those frequent jokes of his. In the meantime, the body of the negro was still writhing and the swollen tongue, covered with bloody froth, was protruding from the half open mouth.

"That man is strangling!" again declared Doctor Urbina, who had just observed an unmistakable symptom.

This time the negro had to sit down for

laughter. He pressed his stomach with his hands; he shook with merriment and his mouth opened wide, showing two rows of very white teeth.



ON THE COAST PLAIN

"That man is strangling!" shouted Doctor Urbina rushing toward the stage.

The negro laughed, the friends of Urbina laughed; everybody laughed on seeing that

comical scene which was not mentioned in the programme. The doctor jumped upon the stage with one leap and severed the rope with a pocket knife which he carried in his hand. The body fell flat upon the boards with a dull thud. Then the laugh died in the mouth of the hangman, who now looked with terror at his companion lying on the floor, an inert mass.

For an hour Doctor Urbina labored to bring the negro back to life. It was all in vain. The poor fellow had played his part with an excess of perfection.

. . . . . .

My neighbor, tired of talking, had resumed the interrupted reading of his paper. Behind us the immense mass of the Cordillera grew constantly as we kept drawing away from it, and the train ran rapidly over the hot coast plain in the midst of a perfect orgy of verdure. The trees, covered with parasites and vines, raised their immense branches to the sky, like the arms of fabulous giants. Above the multitude of inter-lacing tops towered, here and there, the tall slender trunk of a palm crowned with its fragile plume.

The rivers flowed swiftly, carrying along century old tree trunks, and on one side or another we could see the green ranks of banana trees, somewhat resembling colossal lilies. At times we had a swift-passing vision of a wooden house or of a palm-thatched hut,

surrounded by cocoanut trees, begonias, pineapples and flowers whose penetrating odors reached us through the car windows, mixed with the hot breath of the heated earth. It was the tropics, with its gloomy forests, its sun of fire, its countless animals and reptiles and its implacable fevers; the tropics, magnificent, triumphant and terrible. While the savage beauty of the spectacle compelled our admiration a feeling began to grow within me, vague at first, afterwards most intense; it was the homesick longing for the pleasant fields of the highlands, and the whitewashed adobe houses which call to mind those of the mother Spain.

UN ESPADACHíN

(A SWORDSMAN.)

THE sons of Alajuela* have their defects, —who indeed is exempt from them?— but on the other hand they have some very commendable qualities. They are frank and loyal, progressive and valiant. In regard to frankness it can be said that they are even inclined to lack diplomacy. Their loyalty is now proverbial, since never have they been known to abandon any unfortunate cause that had their sympathies. A good proof of this is the unchanging fidelity with which they still cherish the memory of the ill-starred Don Juan Rafael Mora.† They are liberty loving to exaggeration; at the very beginning of our life as a nation they showed it by fighting for the republic against the imperial banner of Iturbide. And, so far as bravery is concerned, on every occasion they have been the first to rush into danger. Now it might be internal strife such as the overthrow of Morazan, and again

*(Translator's note.) Capital of the province of Alajuela and one of the largest towns of Costa Rica. With its narrow cobble paved streets, massive church and turreted cuartel, or barracks, it has an old-fashioned, almost mediæval look, and forms a suitable setting for this story which rather reminds one of the misadventures of Don Quijote.

†A former President of Costa Rica who was driven out by a revolution.

a foreign war like that which was waged against Walker's filibusters in Nicaragua. For in this many Alajuelans covered themselves with glory, among others Juan Santa Maria and Don Juan Alfaro Ruiz at Rivas, and General Florentino Alfaro at el Sardinal. My fellow countrymen, therefore, will not take it ill that I reveal one of their small defects, if indeed it is a defect to be somewhat of a braggart. Still, why deny it? The Alajuelan is boastful, and it is not displeasing to him in case of need to make a bold threat.

During the first presidency of Dr. Castro, whom they declared deposed by a daring act of rebellion, there was a time when they made valor a profession. It is true that for their rebellious act they were conquered by the government troops, but that, more than to force of arms, was owing to a well-known piece of treachery. This they have not even yet been able to forget, nor also the extremely ridiculous exaggeration with which the triumph of a considerable army over a handful of men was celebrated. I say, then, that at that time, now long past, all the men in Alajuela were given to deeds of daring and were also more or less skilled in the use of weapons. The gentlemen of the city devoted themselves enthusiastically to the management of the guacalona,* the men of the neighboring villages to that of the Cutacha† and the realera.‡

*Sword with a basket hilt.
†A kind of machete.
‡A long machete.

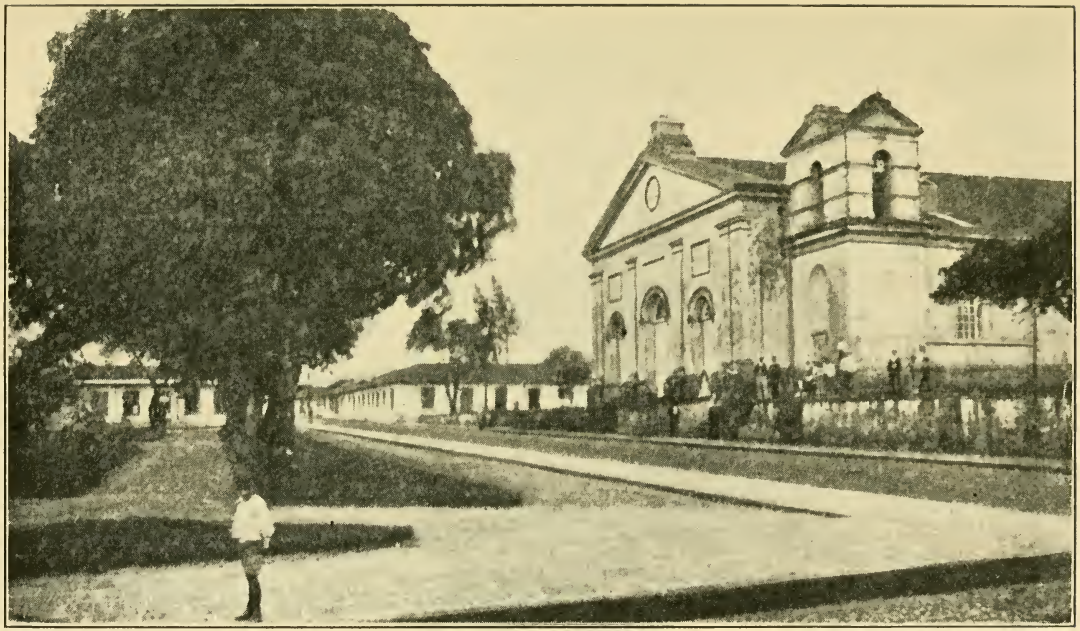
From this love for arms, quarrels arose between one and another, occasioned by local rivalries. Still, as their rancors were not deep and the combatants were more desirous of showing their skill than of doing injury, they generally contented themselves with giving each other a few strokes with the flat of the sword without greater damage.

The field of honor was ordinarily the plaza of the church of La Agonia when the affair was with one of the Llaneros, or plainsmen from the plains of Carmen, and in the place called el Arroyo if the dispute was with one from Rio Sigundo.* As policemen with sleek oily hair had not yet been invented for the delight of housemaids, nor even those watchmen who used to walk the streets at night singing out the hours, dressed like Calabrian bandits, with the cloak hanging from one shoulder, leather sandals on the feet and short gun in hand, the conflicts used to last until the night patrol or a guard from the cuartel came to put a stop to them.

Among the most assiduous in these affairs of honor which took place on moonlight nights, as clear as the day in Alajuela, was a gentleman whom for the needs of this narrative I shall call Don Telésforo.

He was a man of mature age although still agile and vigorous, who passed as an adept in the management of arms and as being experienced in all kinds of adventures, which he

*A village near Alajuela.



CHURCH AND PARK IN ALAJUELA

himself took pleasure in relating; yet as they had all happened during a famous journey which he had made to South America in his youth, they were difficult to verify. Nevertheless nobody would have dared to doubt him, out of respect for the enormous guacalona which always accompanied him when he went out at night muffled in his cloak of San Fernando cloth.

Don Telésforo, in addition to being a swordsman, was fond of love making and was a good player on the guitar. No one knew better than he how to sing a mournful lay, one of those that soften the hardest feminine hearts; and as he liked to display this accomplishment, there was hardly a serenade in which he did not take part. After a tuneful prelude, the secret of which he jealously guarded, he would sing in his rather nasal voice a certain couplet which was the introduction to all the serenades of that epoch:

Tu Amante, Silvia.
Su Amor dedica
Y hoy sacrifica
Su Corazon.

The repertory of Don Telésforo was very extensive, and the song varied according to circumstances. It was tender and loving if the wooer saw that his love was reciprocated, querulous if the lovely Silvia was inclined to be scornful, bitter if it was a case of avenging

infidelity. This was not the only advantage which resulted from his presence in a serenading party. If it were interrupted by the untimely passing of the patrol or of some jealous rival, Don Telésforo would exchange the guitar for the guacalona, and then there was the devil to pay. He remained a bachelor for a long time, because as he used to say "the loose ox has an easy time," but there were those who affirmed that the gallant had had more than one defeat in love during his life. Be that as it might, Don Telésforo finally delivered his valiant hand to a species of virago whose antecedents cannot be cited as models of virtue. This made him lose a great deal in the estimation of people, and was the cause of derogatory remarks, which it may be said in passing, did not travel far, because if the guacalona of Don Telésforo inspired respect, the tongue of his consort was not less feared, and moreover she was one who would not hesitate to pull off hair-ribbons and, if one were to believe what the evil tongues said, one would have to admit as certain that Don Telésforo himself was acquainted only too well with the power of his better half's claws.

One thing, indeed, was evident, and that was the transformation of the gentleman after his marriage. He was not now to be seen in serenades nor in affairs of honor and least of all in little dances at private houses, to which in his good days he had been so partial. It is

to be presumed that his household dragon did not permit him to enjoy these favorite diversions, and for this reason Don Telésforo was plainly deteriorating. His aspect was less fierce, the guacalona was rusting in its scabbard, and his cloak was growing mildewed on its hook. These were doubtless causes why, in the minds of some, respect for him should diminish, and perhaps also, why he should not carry himself with his customary gallantry on two occasions of which I, in a spirit of mischief, am going to tell.

Harassed by domestic tyranny, Don Telésforo began to tipple, at first taking rompope,* but later brandy and other strong liquors, which caused some disorder in his ideas. He commenced to believe himself pursued and surrounded by imaginary perils, and in order to be ready to defend himself from them, passed the silent hours giving thrusts, cuts and backstrokes with the guacalona. Before the dominion of his wife became so absolute in the house, some of his friends and boon companions used to go to fence with him; but now no one came near, through fear of the vixen. This loss of his favorite exercise was one of the things that exasperated him most and threw him a little off his balance.

One morning, while Don Telésforo was entertaining himself by perfecting a thrust, during the absence of his torment, he saw a country-

*(Author's note.) A cold punch made of eggs, milk, sugar and brandy.

man enter the patio with a cartload of firewood. He was just then in need of an adversary in order to judge better the efficacy of his parrying, and believed that the rustic would do for the occasion. He waited until the man had finished unloading the wood, and when he was calling to his oxen he sallied forth with two wooden swords and proposed a fencing bout. The cart man, confused and humble, excused himself as best he could, declaring that he knew absolutely nothing about fencing. Don Telésforo insisted with vehemence, but did not succeed in convincing him. Finally, irritated by this tenacity in declining, he lost patience and passing from words to deeds, gave the fellow a hard blow on his shoulders. Then he who had been so lamblike, changed into a lion. He ran to the cart, seized a club and rushed to attack the irate gentleman. The chronicles of Alajuela do not record a greater cudgelling. The countryman was muscular and the club was of oak.

When Don Telésforo's wife returned from the street, she found him lying in the patio with his head bleeding and his ribs battered, but she could never get out of him the truth about the affair. She afterward learned it from a maidservant who saw the misfortune of the gentleman from the crack of a door.

The other unfortunate incident which I am going to narrate was a consequence of the former one. In spite of the efforts of Don

Telésforo, he could not prevent the thing from being known, and now nobody believed the story of the fall from his horse with which he tried to account for the wounds and bruises on his body.

He was not long in becoming aware of an atmosphere of restrained ridicule that floated about him, ten times more irritating than a direct offence. The smiles of some, the reticence of others, were like an anonymous and terrible buffet which he could not avenge, because the aggressor was not any definite person. It was everybody and yet nobody. Alajuela insulted Don Telésforo, as Fuenteovejuna killed the knight commander of Calatrava, all against one.

The punctilious cavalier understood that it was most necessary to do something very great in order to re-establish the reputation for valor which he had formerly enjoyed. Thus it was that one Monday, which is market day in Alajuela, Don Telésforo, goaded by the desire to recover what he had lost by his misadventure, and perhaps also by certain matutinal drams, sallied forth from his house, guacalona in hand, and went to place himself in the most frequented street in front of an adobe wall of no great height. There he planted himself in the middle of the road, and after passing the tizona* several times along the ground as though to sharpen it, he roared in a stentorian voice:

*The sword of the Spanish hero, El Cid: hence, the sword of a hero.

"Let no one pass this way!"

Immediately the movement of traffic stopped, while the people, some curious, others frightened, commenced to form in groups on all sides to see how the matter was going to end.

"Let no one pass this way!" shouted Don Telésforo, flourishing his sword. "And if any one wants to pass, let him come on. Here I wait him with point, edge and guacal."†

In vain the fierce swordsman roared. Nobody dared to try conclusions with him.

"Isn't there a man for me?" he vociferated, growing even more furious.

Nothing. Complete silence. Don Telésforo now began to retire, with more pride than Don Rodrigo at La Horca, when he saw approaching him an old man, mounted on a mule.

"Let no one pass this way!" bawled the cavalier again scraping his sword along the ground. The rider, without a change of feature, continued advancing until he came within two paces of the madman. There he reined in his mule, and with a suave, calm voice said:

"Señor, I beg you to let me pass, because I am in a great hurry."

"Back! Your hurry doesn't matter," replied Don Telésforo angrily, threatening the breast of the mule with the point of the guacalona.

"See here, señor, you had better let me

†(Author's note.) A name formerly given to the basket hilt of a sword on account of its resemblance to the cups and bowls made from the gourds that grow on the tree of that name.

pass," insisted the old fellow, who was a countryman of a robust aspect.

"Back, I said, coward!"

Then the old man calmly dismounted from his mule and took off his spurs, tying them to a thong on his saddle. Having done this, leisurely, he came toward Don Telésforo, who kept on sending forth sparks of fire.

The two adversaries measured each other with their eyes, the swordsman much excited, the countryman very serene; the one brandishing his huge guacalona, the other armed with a riding whip or crop the stock of which was of lignum vitæ. Don Telésforo launched a stroke at his adversary, but the edge of his sword only blunted itself against the impenetrable wood. Agile and flexible in spite of his years, the old man slipped from beneath the weapon and grasping Don Telésforo by the muscles of his arms, raised him on high with unlooked for strength. A second later the cavalier was flying through the air and disappeared behind the adobe wall. A great splash was heard, and after that, nothing.

The spectators of the combat, curious to learn the stopping place of Don Telésforo, ran to the entrance of the house to which the wall belonged, but they found the doors and windows closed, on account of the absence of the owners, who were in the country for a time. It was necessary, therefore, to send a boy on horseback to get the key, as, though the wall

was rather low on the side toward the street, it was high on the inside, where it served as the boundary for a deep ditch whose waters were very convenient for softening the fall of Don Telésforo. Nine o'clock in the evening was striking when the doors of his prison were opened. Friends and strangers waited his coming out. They were sorrowful in outward appearance, dying of laughter within.

The unfortunate cavalier appeared.

Ten years more were painted on his face, such were the ravages of grief and the rage which was consuming him. Soaked to the skin, with his hair plastered on his skull and his clothing on his body, he was a pitiful sight.

From that disastrous day Don Telésforo languished, and, tortured by the bitterness of his remembrance and the recriminations of his wife, he soon delivered his most noble soul to his Creator.

And thus it was that this illustrious cavalier of Alajuela died.

May God take him to his glory.

LOS GATOS DEMONIACOS

(THE BEDEVILLED CATS.)

WHEN dinner was over and the cigarettes were lighted, we went out to the veranda. Behind the blue line of the mountains the sun was sinking into the Pacific, leaving behind it a glorious splendor which made us fall silent with admiration. It was a conflagration of the whole heavens, an indescribable orgy of colors and shades, which varied from flaming scarlet to the most delicate yellows and greens. The atmosphere, of a reddish tinge at first, began to take on a violet shade, which made us see things as through a mist of pulverized amethysts. Then the magnificent vision began to fade away, and we felt ourselves deeply imbued with the melancholy of the fields at the hour of evening twilight. The immense conflagration was extinguished; one after another the burning cloud masses began to pale, dissipating the thousand phantasms of the sky, islands of glowing molten gold bathed by seas of turquoise, floating bits of tulle, white and undefined silhouettes to which the imagination gave capricious forms of fantastic beings and animals. Soon the gray mist, forerunner of

the night, arose, and at its touch the outline of the landscape melted into a sad, hazy vagueness. A great silence weighed upon the sleeping earth, which the far-away lowing of cattle in the pastures, or the rapid flight of a dove going to rest in some tree with a hurried flapping of wings, interrupted from time to time.

"If you want to hear a few unlikely tales"—said Manuel Diaz, arousing me from the ecstatic reverie in which the superb spectacle was holding me—"come and hear the stories of Feliciano."

Feliciano was one of the men servants who accompanied us on that hunting expedition for which the vacation of Holy Week and the severity of the Lenten dinners served as a pretext. An enthusiastic hunter, he had no rival in finding the resting place of a deer, or the hole of a tepezcuintle*; nor did any one surpass him in the art of serving with neatness and despatch. He was a model for servants, a jewel. Serious and prudent, he had the simplicity to believe thoroughly in the fabulous tales with which the rustic mind likes to adorn everything pertaining to the chase. Feliciano never forgot to turn his gun barrel downward when he shot a bird, an indispensable requisite for making it fall, nor to trace a small cross on the bullets so that those privileged animals such as deer which have

*Paca, Coelogenys paca: a small animal of Central and South America, whose flesh is considered a great delicacy.

the stone,† could not escape from them. His greatest desire was to get one of these precious objects, which make the fortune of those who possess them.

At the moment when we approached the group Feliciano was explaining the virtues of this talisman. According to him, it was a little transparent stone, within which could be seen a deer when one looked through it against the light. If the animal appears lying down it is a sign that the hunter will lose his time; when on the contrary it is seen standing, the quarry is sure. Unfortunately, as the animals which have it are almost invulnerable, it is very difficult to get one. The only thing Feliciano had been able to obtain was an amulet, which he hoped would serve to neutralize the effect of the stone.

He had wanted to skin with his own hands the handsome deer killed by one of us on the morning of that day, because he had observed some old bullets imbedded in one of the hind quarters, a proof that the animal had already been on intimate terms with guns; but he could find no trace of the stone, for all that he searched. Without doubt, the deer had spit it out before dying, as they are accustomed to do when they have time.

The conversation soon became general, and each one began to tell his little yarn. That of Manuel Diaz was very much applauded. This

†(Author's note.) The popular belief is that some deer, usually very old ones, are invulnerable by virtue of a certain little stone which they have beneath their tongue.

disciple of Nimrod stated that having once waited many long hours in ambush at the foot of a cedar, he was already beginning to despair of getting a shot at anything because the barking of the dogs sounded very far away, when suddenly he saw a handsome stag come out of a near-by thicket. With the quick decision of the trained hunter, he aimed, fired and killed it. After this exploit, Manuel settled himself to await the arrival of some one of his companions to help him put the animal on his horse, which he had left a short distance away on the other side of a small stream. After a little, a countryman appeared, who was willing to lend a hand to the fortunate huntsman. Taking the deer between them by the feet, they carried it to the bank of the stream, which was quite deep. There they stopped, and finding it impossible to pass the obstacle with the animal on their backs, they devised the plan of swinging it back and forth, so that with this impulse they might toss it to the other bank. This they did. One, two, three—zip! The deer flew through the air and fell on the other side. But, Oh, marvel! What a portent! Scarcely did it touch the ground, when, like Anteus, recovering new strength on contact with Mother Earth, it began to run as if it had never been dead.

Feliciano was the only one who gave credit to the singular adventure of Manuel Diaz. Sin-

cerely convinced, he assured us that the deer must have been bewitched or possessed of a devil, because there are well-known cases in which malignant spirits have taken certain animals as a dwelling-place for their perverse souls.

"I don't belive it," replied Manuel Diaz. "When has anyone seen an animal possessed of a devil?"

"It does not have to be seen," exclaimed an amateurish hunter, who was much more learned in other matters than in the chase, joining in the discussion. "Feliciano has much reason in saying so, and in support of his thesis I can cite no less a person than Saint Luke, who relates that Jesus cast out certain demons from the body of an unfortunate man and transferred them to a herd of swine, which instantly went mad. By this fact it is confirmed that there is nothing new under the sun and that, much before the transfusion of blood was discovered, that of demons was already practised. In addition to this irrefutable example, history is full of similar ones, and the annals of the Inquisition could instruct us minutely on this point. It is well known that evil spirits show a marked predilection for people and particularly for the delicate bodies of nuns, there being frequent cases during the Middle Ages in which entire convents of pious women have fallen under their dominion. A like thing happened in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the Ursuline nuns of Aix, Lille and Loudun; and without going farther, in the nineteenth century itself, an entire village, that of Morzina in Savoy, has been known to be possessed of the spirit of Satan. But this preference, certainly quite explicable, does not in any way exclude the diabolical possession of irrational beings. I remember that when I was a child I heard a very pious and respectable lady affirm that a certain pig called Pompey, that knew how to count and tell the age of people, was purely and simply an animal possessed of a devil."

"I know the history of some cats which suffered from the same misfortune," said another of the hunters, "but I won't tell it, because we have to get up very early to-morrow morning and it is bed time already."

"Tell it, tell it," exclaimed various voices.

"I will consent to gratify you on condition that we go straight to bed afterwards, for I am dead tired."

The narrator, after throwing away the butt of the cigar which he was smoking, said as follows:

"My father had a fellow scholar in Latin and philosophy, a certain Patrocinio Martinez, who, as it seemed, was not born for great things. He had a sufficient willingness to learn, but his laziness was superior to his desire for knowledge. The professor, who was

imbued with Voltairian ideas, said to him one day, very ironically,—'My friend, you are so stupid that you will do only for a priest.' This sprightly saying did not fall into a torn sack; the student took orders and became one of those ignorant priests, yet more virtuous and continent than the generality of the clergy of those times, who only seemed to heed the precept 'increase and multiply yourselves.'

"Little sensible by nature to the temptations, his resistance to which have made Saint Anthony a model so difficult of imitation, he was less rigid in regard to the worship of the golden calf. The generosity of the faithful permitted him to fill his money box with onzas, cuartas and escudos.* Money that came to his hands did not again see the light of the sun, and as robbers caused him a deer-like fear he had the house full of secret and hidden places unknown even to his housekeeper, depository of his confidence in everything else.

"When he grew old and was nearing his dotage, he developed a mania for raising cats. He was so extremely fond of them that he was never without half a dozen of the creatures, and he called them nothing but 'my sons' and 'my heirs,' which did not greatly please the housekeeper, who secretly considered herself the only heir to the priest's fortune, because he had no other relative than a niece, a

*Costa Rican gold coins in circulation some thirty or forty years ago.

spinster, against whom she took good care to prejudice him so that they neither saw nor heard from each other. Things did not turn out, however, in accordance with the desires of the lady, for the cholera epidemic of 1856 took her prematurely to a better life. The curate also fell sick of it but he managed to pull through, thanks chiefly to the care of his niece who, charitably forgetting past offences, came to his aid at the first news of his sickness. When the danger was passed uncle and niece continued living together, and although the priest treated her well, she thought she noticed in him a certain coldness which she could not explain and which finally she attributed to the old man's doting fondness for cats. From that moment there was born in her soul a resolution to get rid of them; but how was she to do it, considering that they were the loved ones of her uncle? To give them poison was perilous not only on account of the difficulty of explaining their death, but also from the ease with which the victims could be replaced. No, this was not the way to reach the desired end. The proper way was to extirpate the evil at the root, to drag out from the very soul of the priest this cattish passion which enslaved him, a thing little less than impossible for one who did not have the jesuitical craft of an Escobar y Mendoza,* or the astuteness of a Talleyrand. Nevertheless, as there is hidden in the heart of

*A famous Spanish Jesuit.

every woman a diplomatic cunning, the niece succeeded in gaining her end with a stratagem, a veritable masterpiece of womanly acumen.

"In the house of the priest, always heretofore so quiet, disturbances began to be heard with an accompaniment of mewings and caterwaulings as though the seven cats of his worship were delivered over to sinful amusements. But these rows occurred only in the absence of Don Patrocinio when the doors and windows were closed. At the same time the niece was as sweet as honey with the pussies, in the presence of her uncle, yet they, with the ingratitude characteristic of their race, did not for that reason depart from the aversion with which they had regarded her from the beginning. Every time that the curate returned from the street he found her laughing, with her eyes sparkling mischievously, and applauding some prank of the interesting little animals. To give credit to her accounts they lacked only the gift of speech, for they did things which left her open-mouthed with admiration, doubting that these could be irrational beings. The priest listened with pleasure to the tales of his niece. Everything relating to his protégés interested him greatly, and even the no slight damage that they caused in the house made him laugh. What then must have been his surprise when, on coming from saying mass one morning, he found the spinster much excited, crossing her-

self and declaring with great consternation that his adored cats were possessed of devils. When the surprise of the first moment had passed he flew into a passion and ordered her to be silent, calling her crazy, and other pretty things.

" 'May God forgive me,' she replied very humbly, 'but it is as true as that you are a saint.' This had more effect on Don Patrocinio, who consented to listen to the reasons which his niece had for believing in the demoniacal possession of the cats. The spinster then told him that they could not hear the names of sacred persons and things without behaving like beings under the power of Satan, which could in no way be natural.

" 'Is it possible,' exclaimed the priest, much alarmed.

" 'Say a benediction before them and you will see.'

"Don Patrocinio could not be convinced of what his niece affirmed with so much tenacity, nevertheless when he reflected, while waiting for the breakfast hour, he began to remember some of the extraordinary and uncanny actions of the cats, and this gave him something to think about. In fact it was neither logical nor sensible to suppose that mere animals could have so much genius and talent.

"The desired hour came at last, and the priest seated himself at the table in front of a fried egg on an old-fashioned earthen-ware

plate. Of the seven cats three were missing, but they were not long in coming, and all arranged themselves about their master, as was their custom, with their pupils fixed on him in the hope of some little mouthful. Then Don Patrocinio rose up and after crossing himself, commenced to pray in a loud voice:

"'Praised and blessed be the most holy Sarca—,' but he said no more, because he stopped in wonder at the prodigious effect which these words had on the pussies. It was a wild flight, a general 'save himself who can.' Those that could not get out of the door jumped through the window. The seven disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.

"'Are you convinced now?' cried the niece from the doorway.

"The priest, horrified, murmured between his teeth some Latin phrases:

"'Exi, anathema, non remaneas nec abscondaris in ulla compagine membrorum—' There he stopped, for he could not remember the rest of the exorcism. For three days the poor man walked about with bowed head, searching for the solution of the problem. Several times he repeated the experiment of saying a benediction before the cats, but always with the same bad result.

"Finally he decided to pronounce the sentence, and one afternoon the sacristan hung all the seven, with the aid of the spinster, who could hardly contain herself for joy.

"Some years afterward the priest died of a stroke of apoplexy, carrying to the tomb his sorrow for the loss of his beloved cats, and the secret of his treasure, which the niece wore herself out in searching for, but in vain.

"When she in her turn was at death's door, it seems that she confessed, contritely, to relieve her conscience, that she had inspired the poor animals with that horror of the Most Holy One by invoking his name at the same time that she flogged them without mercy."

. . . . . .

As it was told to me, thus I tell it to you, dear reader.

EL CLAVEL

(THE PINK.)

EMILIA awoke at daybreak, feverish and exhausted. She had had no rest during the night, turning over in her bed and not losing consciousness for an instant, prisoner of a great mental agitation. Her head ached, her ears buzzed and her skin was feverish. She made efforts of will to fall asleep, but could not succeed in doing so. One single thought, assaulted her with exasperating tenacity, planting itself deep in her brain and driving out all others. Tired of struggling she finally yielded herself up conquered by the enslaving idea. Then there reigned in her mind the fascinating person of Carlos Gutierrez. It was a continuous struggle, a siege that she had tried in vain to withstand, guided by her good judgment and her native seriousness which put her on guard against an affair in every way dangerous. The inequality of birth and position between them was too great for an alliance to be possible. Emilia comprehended it too well with her clear discernment and short but certain experience of social distinctions, acquired by contact with her companions in the college.

On the other hand, she was not the woman to lend herself to amorous pastimes and frivolities. Neither her dignity nor her pride would tolerate it. It is true that Carlos seemed sincere, but however he might be, the prudent course for the present was to maintain the most absolute reserve and to make no sign that could reveal to the young man the state of her mind.

These and other very discreet thoughts ran through her well-balanced little head; but no sooner had her heart seized the baton, than her good resolves vanished instantly, and her prudent reflections changed to flattering fancies which made the secret longing of her soul seem possible of attainment. Through the prism of her illusions the obstacles that separated her from Carlos appeared less insurmountable than cold reason would represent them; for if he belonged to an aristocratic and proud family she had no cause to be ashamed of her own, modest it is true, but of a respectability without blemish. Her father was considered the leading citizen of the village and was a wealthy man, things which were not in the least to be despised. Moreover, on her mother's side she was related by marriage to people of consequence. Passing from these general considerations to those which directly concerned her person, she could not deny that she felt satisfied with herself. There was no doubt that she was

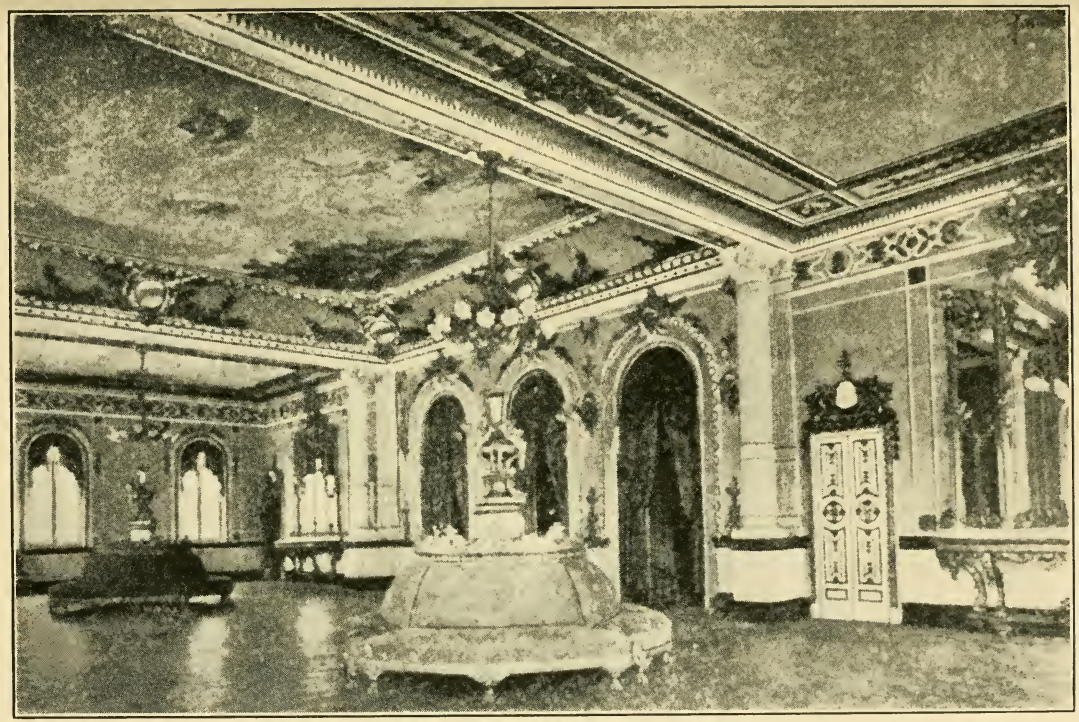
pretty. Her mirror proved that beyond question, as also did the admiring glances of the men who always turned repeatedly to look as she passed, irresistibly attracted by her charm. Judging with impartiality she considered herself intelligent and of pleasing manners; she felt that she had the power to rise to a higher plane in the social scale than the one she had until then occupied; yet more than all she was flattered by one recollection, the most pleasing to her feminine vanity, which was, so to speak, the decisive proof, the ratification of her beauty.

Some months before she had been in the national theatre of San José, with the object of seeing the theatre and hearing an opera company of considerable fame. Much embarrassed by the novelty of the spectacle and the brilliancy of the audience, she had been careful to remain in the rear of the box, in spite of the request of her friends who accompanied her; nevertheless many scrutinizing opera glasses searched her out even there, and remained fixed on her a long while. During an intermission they went out to take a turn in the corridors and the foyer, where her presence caused a ripple of curiosity and admiration among the spectators.

Afterwards she heard that many persons had inquired about the beautiful unknown. This revelation of the power of her attractions awoke in her the slumbering vanity of a

pretty woman, and caused to spring up in her soul the secret desire for new triumphs. Her father, however, although sufficiently rich to live comfortably, even luxuriously, in the capital, never cared to leave the place of his birth, where he was esteemed and liked and was a person of importance. She and her mother would have preferred to move to San José, the city which to them seemed to be the emporium of pleasure, the little Paris of which all those who have never gone out of our little fatherland dream.

It had been hard for Emilia to accustom herself to country life after passing four years in the capital attending the "Higher College for Señoritas," where she had received very careful instruction which would probably prove more prejudicial than helpful in case she should marry a man of her own station, on whom she would be inclined to look as an inferior, the inevitable result of an unequal education. She thus foresaw it and doubtless this was the reason why she decidedly refused the best catches of the village who made haste to pay court to her on her return to the paternal roof. Rather arrogant and proud, she took little pleasure in their friendship because she had become unused to rustic crudeness, which now annoyed her. Thus it was that she cultivated friendly relations with a half dozen persons who were the social cream of the village. She was very seldom seen on



THE FOYER OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE

the street or at her window, and although very fond of reading, novels made very little impression on her tranquil, self-contained and peaceful imagination, for she was not romantic. Aside from a few harmless flirtations during the time that she lived in San José at the house of a relative, she had given ear to no suit, much less had been in love with any one, until the day on which she saw Carlos Gutierrez for the first time.

The family of this young man owned a coffee hacienda* in the vicinity of the village, where each year they spent a season of three months. The fathers of Emilia and Carlos had known each other for a long time as proprietors of adjoining lands, and never failed to visit each other once or twice during the summer. Thus some neighborly intercourse had sprung up between the wives of both, and later on between Emilia and Hortensia, the sister of Carlos. The latter Emilia had never seen until recently, as he had been in Germany for many years studying medicine. What a deep impression the day on which she met him, while paying a visit to the hacienda, made on her! From the first moment she felt herself conquered, subjugated by his graceful bearing and his frank and cordial manners. Making calls ordinarily wearied her, but that day she wished that her mother's visit might never end, and in spite of the fact that it was long, as her mother's usually were, it seemed very

*An estate or plantation.

short. Moreover it was prolonged a while because Hortensia and Carlos took the trouble to accompany them some distance on their road until they were near the village.

Afterwards she had seen the young doctor rather frequently; on Sunday when she came out from mass, or when he was passing her house on horseback going to the hacienda, or returning to the city, since it was his custom to come on Saturday afternoon and return to his business early on Monday. What a fine way he had of saluting, how gracefully and elegantly he took off his hat! It must be that princes uncovered in that manner. At various times he stopped to talk with her and her mother, always leaving them charmed with the nobleness of his address.

Emilia noticed from the first day that Carlos looked at her with interest. At each new meeting this feeling was more pronounced; notwithstanding, she kept from doing or saying anything that could make it evident that she had noticed it. A little after this famous visit she received an invitation from Hortensia to eat melcochas* with them. Before deciding to accept it she hesitated a good deal, because she realized the danger of abandoning herself to the budding inclination which was stirring in her breast. At length, in spite of the counsels of prudence, deceiving herself by sophisms and subtle arguments, she allowed

*A confection much resembling molasses candy.

herself to be carried by the imperious desire of seeing Carlos.

When she arrived at the hacienda she found a good many people there, on account of its being the birthday of Hortensia. In addition to several families who were spending the summer on neighboring estates, a number of young friends, all very elegant, had come by coach from San José. Emilia, who was not prepared for such an occasion, felt rather ashamed in the presence of such elegant, haughty dames, who looked at her with a mocking curiosity without speaking, and if it had not been for the kindness of Carlos, who consoled her with caricatures of the impertinences of those ladies, she would have passed an even more disagreeable time; the young man, however, paid her marked attention, waiting on her and courting her with marked preference, which gave cause for whisperings and malicious gossiping. After refreshments, which were served under a wide spreading higueron,* the young ladies and the gallants of San José began to romp like children much to the surprise of Emilia, who was not yet familiar with the license that people of high position are accustomed to take on such occasions. When they were tired of running and acting like mad creatures, they decided to return to the house where dinner was awaiting them. When that was over they improvised

*Giant fig-tree. A splendid shade tree of the tropics.

a merry dance, which was the conclusion of the festival.

Emilia, who danced poorly was unwilling to yield to the requests of Carlos to dance with him, for she was not the woman to consent to appear at a disadvantage before those rivals whose waltzing was a dream. In this and many other things they outshone her; it was useless to deny it. On the other hand, not one of them was so pretty as she. It might not be modest to think thus, but the truth before everything. About ten o'clock the party broke up, at the instance of the mammas, who, with much difficulty, managed to gather their flocks and put them in the carriages after the interminable chattering and kissing of leavetaking. The families living on neighboring haciendas departed on horseback. Only Emilia, whose home was so close by, returned on foot. Her father had come for her, but Carlos wished by all means to go with her to her house.

The recollection of that nocturnal walk, in company with the young man, moved her deeply. Even the smallest details had engraved themselves on her memory and were still there palpitating with life. A faint light came down from the star-spangled sky, permitting them to see merely the white surface of the road; the locusts and other insects chirped and hummed in the ditches, and the glow worms and fireflies danced in the obscu-

rity, which was impregnated with the voluptuous breath of slumbering flowers. Her father led the way and showed them the bad places. She and Carlos followed, arm in arm, silent and subdued on finding themselves so near each other in the mystery of the night which gave them a disturbing feeling of complete solitude. Near a little bridge which they had to cross, they saw a pair, also arm in arm, disappear in the darkness of a grove of trees.

"They must be lovers," murmured Carlos in her ear. "Happy man," he added with a sigh. She said nothing, but in her breast an impassioned voice replied very softly, "Happy girl."

All this had happened a week before, and since then Emilia had had no rest nor another thought. Things had come to such a pass that a solution of some kind was necessary; if she admitted the fact that Carlos was paying court to her it was imperative that he make a clear and final declaration of his purpose; or if not, that she must cut off all intercourse with him and his family, in order to repair the harm while there was yet time. The difficulty lay in knowing which of these two courses was the most proper and suitable. This dilemma had caused to be born in the soul of Emilia an incessant conflict which held her in suspense and robbed her of sleep. Already the evening, when after much reflection she had resolved to follow the counsels of sane reason, had seen all her good purposes weaken on the

receipt of a note from Hortensia inviting her to a horseback excursion for the following day.

Nevertheless prudence triumphed, and she had sorrowfully declined the invitation, pleading bad health, which the weariness that was painted on her face made to seem credible. Unfortunately Carlos passed by in the afternoon at the moment when she was going casually to her window. But who could say with certainty that the coincidence was all from chance? She herself did not know nor could she have given an exact account of how she went there; mechanically maybe, perhaps impelled in spite of herself by an irresistible desire. The young doctor talked to her of the projected excursion, showing his opposition visibly when he heard that Emilia would not take part in it. He was insistent in his demands that she change her mind, and finally she promised him that she would go if she should feel better on the following morning; to inform him of which they agreed to see each other on coming out from mass.

"Don't worry," he said to her coaxingly, as he was leaving. "If you are sick, I'll cure you." Hardly had the young man gone on his way when Emilia felt humiliated and angry with herself. Was it that she had so little will and strength of character that she could not resist the fascination that this man exercised over her? Hidden behind a window she watched him go away, sitting well on his

spirited horse, and her heart went after him. But the idea that perhaps he considered her a mere summer pastime, a trinket that is thrown away when it amuses no more, awake in her the old plebeian hatred of the aristocrat, an inexorable feeling made up of humiliation and envy. Notwithstanding that this supposition was intolerable to her self-esteem, there was still another much more unbearable; yet the possibility of such an outrageous thing she did not wish even to consider. Her whole being protested against it. Carlos, a gentleman so high-minded and honorable, was incapable of entertaining such a project. Nevertheless, who can trust in men when even those who seem most chivalrous have no scruple in shamefully deceiving a poor woman? The recent misfortune of a very beautiful cousin of hers, who had lost her honor through having believed in the promises of a young man belonging to the very flower of San José society, was a good proof that no one is to be trusted.

From time to time an internal voice interrupted her, mockingly, by saying that all this philosophy lacked point considering that Carlos had not once said that he loved her. This was all true enough, yet it was not less true that he made it plain by a thousand exquisite attentions and a studied reticence as significant as the most frank declaration. Moreover that could not now be long in coming. Emilia foresaw it; many times she had

seen it trembling on Carlos' lips, awaiting merely a glance or a gesture on her part; but she, far from calling it forth, had always managed to elude it.

This multitude of opposing ideas, born of her feeling of self-respect and the love which Carlos inspired in her, had been the cause of her sleeplessness of the night before. For all that she racked her brains in search of a fit solution of the problem she had been able to decide on none; rather, the confusion of her mind was constantly increasing. Finally she decided to get up. As she put her feet on the floor she felt a giddiness and a violent pain in her head, a consequence of the excited state of her nervous system. A cold bath was necessary to calm her. With veritable delight Emilia put her burning hands into the soothing water, at contact with which she could feel that the fever parching her skin was growing less.

Suddenly, without effort, she saw the situation clearly. She could receive no courtship from Carlos unless he should make known clearly and definitely the intention of making her his wife. This her honor and the circumstances in which they both were placed required. Therefore the beginning of the intimacy that had been established between them must cease at once, together with her visits to the hacienda, so as to oblige him to come to her house in search of her if he really esteemed

and cared for her sufficiently to marry her in spite of the inequality of birth.

Having come to this decision, Emilia quickly began her toilet, for it was nearly the hour for the only mass that was celebrated in the village. While she was combing before her mirror, the wavy and abundant hair, which crowned her brow like a helmet of polished ebony, she smiled with satisfaction at the distinction of her face. Her velvety black eyes seemed larger than ever in the midst of the shadows that sleeplessness and fatigue had placed about them. Her small mouth with its red and rather full lips looked as tempting as some ripe fruit beneath her fine straight nose. She was truly beautiful, not so much by reason of classic lines, but rather the delightful harmony of every part, the smooth freshness of the skin and the smallness of the ears of irreproachable form.

It cannot be positively stated that Emilia heard the mass with devotion. The light colored costume of Hortensia, kneeling near the principal altar, distracted her and reminded her constantly of things that do not harmonize with the abstraction needful in attending divine service. She felt that her resolution was not now so firm and began to fear the moment of her interview with Carlos who surely would try to dissuade her from her purpose. This indeed he did. He was awaiting her on the church steps, and his first

words were to declare that, if she stayed at home neither would he go to the picnic. Afterwards Hortensia came up to unite her petitions with those of Carlos, and even his mother herself took a hand in the matter, assuring her that her indisposition was of no conse-

A VILLAGE CHURCH

quence since it was no more than a little headache which would be cured by the air and exercise. Everything was conspiring against her. It was a fatality before which she must bow.

The plaza of the village had been decided on as the meeting place. As soon as the invited

company had arrived, they all set out together for their destination, a very picturesque spot situated on the bank of a river some three hours distant on horseback. Emilia rode along rather taciturn at seeing herself thus overruled in her resolution. Carlos placed himself at her side and did not leave her during the whole ride, repeatedly praising her for the skill with which she managed her horse, and saying many endearing and extravagant things which soon dispelled her ill-humor.

The road, rough and stony, was quite deserted, as it was Sunday. Here and there they passed a miserable hut, almost always with door closed in the absence of its occupants who had gone to the neighboring village to hear mass, to buy, and above all to take their little drams. The dogs which had stayed to watch it barked at the trampling of the horses and ran after them until a lash from a whip made them turn back howling. Upon the trees of the hedges the purple orchids unfolded their amethyst vestments, and the branches of the coffee trees hung drooping and withered from the recent picking and the rigor of the dry season. The pastures were getting yellow, completely shorn of green things, and the unhappy cattle maintained a fruitless struggle searching for fresh blades of grass to assuage the pangs of hunger. The thirsty earth was awaiting with impatience the coming of the rainy season.

They halted at the edge of a clear crystalline stream in the cool shade of a wide-spreading tree. The horses drank eagerly, and the men dismounted to overlook the ladies' saddles, tightening the cinch of one, adjusting the stirrup of another. Perhaps there was also some stealthy pressing of small, well-shod feet, although we dare not affirm it positively not having seen it, as neither did Hortensia's aunt, a lady of some forty years who played the ungrateful part of duenna.

The descent to the river was difficult and dangerous, along a steep trail shut in by thorny brambles, which, with much discourtesy plucked at the skirts and hats of the ladies. It was finally accomplished without mishap, in the midst of much laughter and many feminine exclamations and little shrieks of terror more feigned than real. Below, the river formed a pool at the foot of an enormous perpendicular cliff which raised itself from the opposite shore like a cyclopean wall, crowned with trees whose branches projected over the depths below and shaded them. A little beyond, the waters rushed down the sharp descent of the river-bed boiling among the round shining rocks that tried to block the way.

On a little sandy beach, covered as by an awning with overspreading branches, breakfast, which had been brought ahead of them by the men servants, was awaiting them. Since

appetites were keen, all hailed it with enthusiasm. From the water, where they had been placed to cool, emerged bottles of wine and beer; from the saddle bags came fried chickens, ham, plump roasts of beef, and preserves, all nicely wrapped up in plantain leaves, which have the virtue of giving to eatables a delicious flavor. All seated themselves as best they could, with exquisite discomfort, the gentlemen gallantly serving the ladies. As there was more than one pair of lovers the necessity and fitness of the aunt's respectable presence is explained, even though it were but to comply with the requisites of propriety.

When their appetites had been satisfied the company broke up little by little into small groups or isolated couples. Emilia did not care to be separated from the lady who chaperoned the young people, for she was unwilling to give a chance for more courting on the part of Carlos. He, who surely was expecting something different, was quite put out, going away and sitting down on a rock. He stayed there some time, looking mournfully at the movements of the water and the flittings of the birds that came to bathe and drink, though frightened by the unaccustomed presence of people in that spot ordinarily so peaceful. Finally, wearying of being alone, he again joined the group presided over by his aunt, which was by far the most serious of all. In spite of his bad humor he could not but ad-

mire Emilia, truly adorable in that rustic setting, which suited wonderfully well the character of her ripe beauty which if it lacked that aristocratic elegance, the fruit of a series of cultured generations, was not for that reason less charming. Some of the girls set out to search for flowers and plants while Hortensia directed the opening of some jars of preserved fruits and other dainties for luncheon. A very young and enterprising gentleman stirred up quite an excitement by saying that he had discovered grains of gold in the sand of the river, and walked from group to group showing a handful of it in which some little flakes could really be seen shining like diminutive spangles. The March sun* justified its reputation by maintaining a suffocating temperature in spite of the shade and coolness of the river.

Carlos, after hovering a while near Emilia, who always kept close by the aunt, finally seated himself at her side. He was conversing with her when Hortensia came up to offer them some grapes and peaches. She was accompanied by a fastidious young lady who used rouge too freely, and was accustomed to look with friendly eyes on the young doctor. He did not care to take anything that his sister offered him. Then her companion interposed with a malicious air, offering in her turn some blackberries on the stem which she herself

*March is usually the hottest month of the year in Costa Rica.

had just picked. At the same time she said, addressing Hortensia:

"You will see that he won't say no to me, because these are wild and thorny fruits like those which your brother is so fond of." Emilia understood the impertinence, and her cheeks flushed with anger.

"You are right," replied Carlos, accepting them, "I like everything that is natural, and that is why the roses Emilia has in her cheeks seem so beautiful to me." The reply was worthy of the attack, and without waiting for a second thrust, the young lady of the rouge went away after Hortensia who, to hide the laughter that was struggling within her, had departed almost on a run.

When the sun was well down they began to think of returning. Then, while the men were superintending the preparations for the march, the women did a little stealthy retouching with the aid of small hand-mirrors and other pocket utensils. Emilia, who was unacquainted with these refinements, began to watch the comings and goings of a little bird that attracted her attention.

"What a beautiful orchid!" she exclaimed suddenly, pointing to a lofty branch that projected over the river.

"Charming, beautiful, divine!" replied various feminine voices.

"Would you like to have it?" inquired the voice of Carlos behind Emilia.

"I should be delighted;—but it is impossible —" she added, after surveying the branch which belonged to one of the trees that crowned the cliff on the opposite shore.

"I like to conquer impossibilities," replied the young man, drawing his revolver and aiming at the capricious flower.

On seeing his action the group of girls disbanded. Some fled away; others remained near by with their fingers in their ears. The sound of the shot reverberated in the deep valley, and the flower detached itself from its stem.

"Bravo, Carlos!" shouted the men who had come up at the sound of the report. The women clapped their hands. The rejoicing was short-lived however, because the elusive flower fell into the middle of the river. Without hesitating, Carlos, dressed as he was, plunged into the water and in two strokes was within reach of it. So unexpected and swift was this action that none of those present had time to stop him. The young man was proudly returning now, swimming on his side with only one arm and holding the coveted flower out of the water with the other, but the spectators noticed that for all his efforts to reach the bank, he did not succeed. On the contrary, the current, which was very rapid beneath the deceitful calm of the surface, was little by little carrying him away. Nevertheless, nobody actually noticed the peril in which

the swimmer was until they saw him disappear among the rocks as he was swept along with terrifying swiftness by the water. A cry of terror broke forth from the lips of all, and a number of the companions of Carlos started on a run along the bank to aid him, without realizing the uselessness of what they were doing. Hortensia was on the point of fainting, and her aunt prayed and sobbed at the same time. Emilia, breathless and pale as death, followed the events of the drama with awful dread.

"Saved! Saved!" shouted the far-away voices of those who ran. In fact, he was now out of danger. An excellent swimmer, he had not lost for an instant the coolness indispensable for escaping from the rocks against which the water hurled him with terrible violence. This struggle lasted but a few moments, which however seemed dreadfully long to the whole party. Luckily, he was able to seize hold of a low-hanging branch that almost touched the water, and that saved his life.

Some minutes afterwards Carlos reached the place where the ladies were, and without any affectation offered Emilia the orchid, which he had succeeded in saving by holding it in his teeth. She, trembling and panting, looked at him with dilated eyes, unable to utter a word; two large tears ran silently down her cheeks. A delirious joy succeeded her anguish and horror. Hortensia, recovered from her

faintness hung about his neck and kissed him repeatedly, laughing and crying at the same time. The aunt, on her knees, was giving thanks to God. When the excitement had calmed down a little all began to talk at once, telling what he or she had seen or done, without anyone's listening or paying attention to what the rest said. It cost Carlos some labor to free himself from Hortensia's arms so as to go and fall into those of his aunt and then into those of his men friends, who congratulated him with secret envy.

The return home was very hurried out of consideration for the hero who was soaked to the skin; yet they were unable to get there before half past seven in the evening. Emilia stopped at her house as they passed. During the entire ride homeward she was very silent, deeply moved by the great peril to which the man whom she secretly loved had for her sake exposed himself. A multitude of pleasing thoughts surged through her mind. Her vanity and her affection were completely satisfied by the splendid proof of his love that Carlos had given before so many persons. In her inmost soul she was delighted at the downfall of that impertinent rival who had tried to humiliate her. How well and how opportunely Carlos had defended her! She still seemed to see the angry face of the poor girl and the mocking smile of Hortensia. How would she feel after what had happened?

Furious, without doubt, for Carlos had risked his life merely to satisfy a small desire of the "wild and thorny fruit," as the painted one had called her.

Her intention was now very far from avoiding Carlos, or even rejecting his gallantry. Her feelings had changed completely in the space of a few minutes, by reason of the gallant act of the young man, which had reached her very soul. Now she felt herself conquered, defenseless, willing to surrender at the first word; but he, either by design or from an exquisite sentiment of delicacy, did not make the least insinuation at a time when it was lawful to suppose her independence was overcome by gratitude. Only on taking leave of her it seemed that he had pressed her hand a little more than usual.

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The dashing swimming exploit of Carlos was much talked about by friends and others. Those who knew him well were of the opinion that the act was simply a sudden outburst of his impetuous and chivalrous character, without attributing to it greater importance; which does not mean that there was a lack of suppositions and cutting speeches unfavorable and derogatory to Emilia, which some uncharitable persons, especially the young lady of the blackberries, took pains to spread.

The father as well as the mother of Carlos reproached him for his rashness and made prudent observations concerning his gallant attentions, which were compromising Emilia since they could not have matrimony as an object.

"May God save us from your marrying that country wench. That would be too much!" exclaimed Hortensia quite angrily. Carlos laughed and replied jestingly. At heart he was not in love with Emilia. It is true he liked her very much and her reserve was an incentive; but between that and making her his wife there was an impassable abyss for one who had such a deep-rooted respect for social distinctions as he had. To marry a girl who was not of his people, as he himself expressed it, he considered an absurdity so great that it did not deserve the honor of discussion.

On the following morning, when he was returning on horseback to San José, he saw Emilia at her window with the famous flower pinned to her breast, and in spite of the fact that he had decided to stop making love to her out of respect for the opinion of his parents, he could not resist the desire of seeing her and talking with her; yet the conversation, contrary to the hopes of Emilia, did not pass beyond ordinary trivialities. Not without displeasure did she see him go away leaving unsaid the word which, before, she had feared

and now vehemently desired. In the internal strife that she had been sustaining the final triumph was on the side of vanity and love, which now raised themselves on the ruins of her prudence, her discretion, and even her self-esteem. Her desire at the moment was that all should know that Carlos loved her and that she reciprocated, without caring what people might think or say. Only the interests of her passion concerned her now.

In this morbid state of mind Emilia passed the week. At times she imagined that Carlos would choose to communicate with her by letter, and began to look eagerly for the arrival of the mail, which each time brought her a new disappointment. The total absence of news finally made her lose patience, for even Hortensia did not appear in the village during all those days.

The longed for Saturday arrived at last. Emilia arose early, did her various household tasks, dressed herself becomingly, and began to count the hours until five o'clock in the afternoon. Then she went to the window to await the passing of Carlos who was accustomed to go by a little after that hour. On her breast she wore the orchid which the young man had so valiantly conquered for her and which by great care she had preserved, feeling sure that this detail would not pass unnoticed by him. She waited at first with comparative calm; after half an hour she be-

gan to get impatient. Each horseman whom she saw approaching from a distance made her breast beat high with hope, only to be cast down and disappointed on learning that it was not the man of her desire. Night fell without Carlos' passing. What could it mean? Emilia grew desperate in making varied surmises. Had anything happened to him? Could he be ill? That was not probable, for she would have learned of it through some of the servants of the hacienda. It was more logical to think that it was due to some resentment which he felt toward her, caused by her former reserve and coldness. Now he wanted to make her furious also. Yes, it must be that. He surely had cause to think her over-proper and prudish. Well, who had started her into these fastidious worries about a gentleman of such high position as Carlos?

She passed a very restless night, but on the following day while she was going to mass, she consoled herself by thinking that there was as yet no reason to despair, for, looking at things calmly, it was quite possible that Carlos' absence should be caused by some other circumstance which she could not divine. She looked all over the church for Hortensia, but could see only her mother and the aunt in the customary place. The hope, which she was cherishing, of seeing Carlos on going out was the cause of a new disillusion.

"There is something wrong; there is something wrong," she kept repeating, as she noticed that Hortensia had not come to mass.

She passed all of Sunday in great uneasiness, so that her surprise was most pleasant when she saw Hortensia arrive on Monday. She came in, while passing, to invite her to a solemn mass in the church of El Senor de Esquipulas in the neighboring village of Alajuelita, a service which she had vowed when Carlos was in such great peril. The ceremony was to take place on the following Thursday, with the whole family in attendance. On asking Hortensia the cause of her not being in the church the day before, the latter told her that she had gone with her father to San José. From there they had gone to take part in a large picnic which the young ladies of the Arburola family had given on Sunday, at their hacienda in Tres Rios, as a farewell to the summer season.

She held forth at length upon the details of the festival, which had been very fine, with a large number of invited friends who had gone from the capital in a special train. On hearing her mention the Arburola girls Emilia felt a vague uneasiness. She had observed that this name was mentioned quite often in the conversation of Hortensia who never lost a chance of dwelling on their beauty and elegance. As for her, she knew them only by reputation. The two sisters were held to be

as coquettish and frivolous as they were beautiful, and any number of escapades, more or less scandalous, were related about them. Carlos also was in the habit of talking a good deal about them, praising their brightness, their grace, and even their extravagances, saying that they had all the charm of Andalusian women. These circumstances, to which she had formerly paid no attention, now caused her an unfamiliar and painful sensation. With much skill and caution she began to draw out from Hortensia that during the picnic Carlos had been quite taken with one of them, Elvira, the prettier; and at each new detail she felt a sharp pain at her heart. It was the gnawing of jealousy which she was experiencing for the first time.

. . . . . .

Sadly and mournfully Emilia heard the mass of thanksgiving, as she saw that the one chiefly interested was not there in spite of his promise to be present. Two musical celebrities from the capital took part in the service with soul-stirring songs, and poor Emilia was so downcast that she was on the point of weeping during various passages especially touching. Carlos arrived when the mass was half over. On seeing him Emilia could not hide her joy. He also was very affable with her, and during their return was prodigal of polite attentions. When they were once more in the village and about to separate, he said

that such a pretty ceremony ought to have a fitting conclusion, and for that reason he hoped that all would come to dinner that afternoon at the hacienda. Emilia accepted the invitation, with the acquiescence of her mother, who for her part declined it, so that it was agreed that Hortensia and Carlos should come for Emilia in the afternoon.

Never was she happier than at that dinner. All her heart-burnings had disappeared like an ugly nightmare. The presence of Carlos caused her pains and doubts to vanish, as the rays of the rising sun dispel the shades of night. Contrary to her custom, she was merry and talkative, replying easily to the jests that were directed at her, and more than once with real wit. After coffee the elders became absorbed in the abstruse pleasure of Malilla.* Hortensia seated herself at the piano, while Emilia and Carlos went out on the balcony with the pretext of taking the air, really because they wished to be alone. The moon illumined the landscape with its white, sad light, which predisposes one to tenderness and to dreams. Both remained silent, contemplating the pale luminary which seemed to glide along among the little clouds, which at times obscured it.

"I have to collect a debt from you," said Carlos, after an interval of silence.

"A debt?"

"Yes."

*A game of cards resembling whist.

"Might I know what it is?"

"I have no objection to telling it; but first promise me that you will pay it."

"With great pleasure, provided that I can."

"Everything that one wishes is possible."

"That is not accurate, for above our will is God."

"That is true, but the French say that what woman wishes God wishes."

"The French are very gallant."

"So they say, but let us return to the debt. Will you consent to pay it?"

"First tell me what it is about."

"Well then, give me one of those flowers in exchange for that other of which you know." Carlos indicated a bunch of pinks that she was wearing on her breast. She felt disconcerted by the unexpectedness of the request, and did not know what to answer. Through the windows of the drawing room the light notes of a waltz of Waldteuffel issued, which enfolded them in the voluptuousness of their gentle, dreamy rhythm. Carlos kept pleading in a low and supplicating voice, which made Emilia's heart throb until she was almost choking. Conquered at last, she delivered the coveted flower. He also kept her hand and kissed it passionately. Emilia felt herself growing faint at the touch of Carlos' burning lips on her skin. The arrival of Hortensia put an end to the daring acts of her bold brother, who secretly began to curse at her

inopportune arrival. She, however, who divined his feelings and knew why he had gone out, began to talk a lot of nonsense with the intention of making him rage. Emilia was too deeply moved to be able to talk, nor did she understand the questions of Hortensia. Carlos, who was furious, kept silent, twisting his mustache. The sound of voices and the trampling of horses interrupted the chatter of the malicious sister.

"Hortensia! Hortensia!" cried several feminine voices from below.

Hortensia went out on the balcony and recognizing those who had arrived, cried in her turn: "Elvira! Margarita! What a surprise;" and turning gleefully to Carlos, added, "There are the Arburolas."

It was in fact they, who, taking advantage of the moonlight for a horseback ride, had come to see Hortensia in company with several mutual friends of both sexes. Carlos ran to receive them, and while he was going downstairs carrying Emilia's pink in his hand, he put it in his buttonhole with an unthinking movement. The commotion which the arrival of the Arburola girls and their retinue made in the house was not small. The card players dispersed, for the father also had to go down to receive such distinguished guests, while the mother awaited them in the drawing room, and the aunt went hurriedly to superintend the preparing of supper.

Emilia did not know where to stay, since now nobody took note of her insignificant person, in the midst of so much coming and going. The exuberance and chattering of the two sisters and their friends completely quelled her good spirits and silenced her, and when, after some time, Hortensia remembered to present her to the new arrivals, she played the part of a child before its examiners.

The Arburola girls were wild to dance. Nothing daunted them, not even the inconvenience of their riding habits, which they held up as best they could. Hortensia struck up a waltz, Carlos set the example with Elvira, and all the others followed, except Emilia, who remained in one corner, her heart torn by jealously, without being able to drag herself away from the spectacle which for her was torture. Pale with wrath, she watched her rival in Carlos' arms, graceful, animated, and throbbing with pleasure, gliding about to the time of the music with the self-possession and elegance of a high-bred woman. From time to time, as Carlos murmured something in her ear, she smiled and half closed her eyes with a refined coquetry. To complete the cruelty, the waltz which Hortensia was playing was the same one to whose music Carlos had kissed her hand, murmuring tender phrases which had gone to her very heart, the same phrases that he might now be saying to that detested Elvira, who was prettier than she; for it was

useless to close one's eyes to the evidence. That woman might be whatever one pleased, yet she was ideally beautiful, of a dangerous, perverse beauty, made up entirely of temptations.

When the waltz was over Carlos conducted Elvira out to take the air, paying no more attention to Emilia than if she had not existed. The poor girl in her corner was being consumed by jealousy, wrath and shame. Then came a moment when she could endure no more, and as no one took notice of her she went to the dining-room in search of a glass of water, for she was suffocating. While she was drinking it, the sound of Carlos' voice made her tremble. With infinite precaution she stole up to a window which opened on the balcony, and through which it seemed to her the voice had entered.

"I assure you, Elvira," Carlos was saying at that moment, "that you have no reason to doubt my words."

"As if men could ever tell the truth!"

"Men perhaps; but I am not a man since I have known you."

"How delightful! And what are you now?"

"Everything that you wish."

"A flatterer?"

"Not that by any means. Say rather an animal."

"An animal, because you say you care for me! Thanks for your gallantry. Do you

know, that little quiet mouse is not ugly. You haven't bad taste, Don Carlos; although that swimming affair seems rather exaggerated to me."

"Why don't we talk of something else? Of what you promised me Sunday in Tres Rios, for example."

"For your good behavior since then, is that it?"

"I have already told you, Elvira —"

"Keep quiet, for you are going to fib again. Who has given you that pink?"

Carlos pulled out the flower which he had forgotten till then and replied with some embarrassment: "I don't remember,—Hortensia perhaps."

"Don't tell fibs. That pink is the brother of some others I have just seen."

"What an idea! You are always so suspicious."

"Very well, I want to believe you this time. Give it to me then."

"With all the pleasure in life, but on one condition."

"Let us see."

Emilia could not hear the rest. The voices died away into an imperceptible murmur. Almost fainting, she seized the curtain tremulously so as not to fall. Suddenly the sound of a kiss went through her like an electric shock. Her strength returned, her bloodless cheeks flushed and her eyes sent forth sparks.

Without taking account of what she was going to do, obeying the impulse of an irresistible feeling, she violently opened the door which gave access to the balcony and planted herself in front of the enamoured pair, who with surprise saw her come out. Elvira kept playing ostentatiously with the pink, the same one that she had just given Carlos, and which had been as a seal of the covenant of love concluded between them that night. Emilia snatched it from her with a quick motion, and turning toward Carlos lashed him twice in the face with the flower, at the same time exclaiming in a hoarse voice: "Oh, you *miserable* creature!"

Elvira and Carlos remained mute. When they recovered from the surprise which the passionate outburst of the poor girl had caused them she was already far away.

"That little country girl is very bold," murmured Elvira at last.

Carlos tried to answer, but did not succeed in saying a word. The blow from the pink stung him as though he had been lashed across the face with a whip.

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